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No. I.

The Gospel of Marah.

A SERMON

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[Translated from the manuscript by A. C. WEDEKIND, D.D.]

[This sermon was preached *extempore*, in German, before the Evangelical Alliance, in Dr. Crosby's Church, New York. It made a profound impression. Now, after repeated solicitation, Dr. Christlieb has consented to write out, from his notes, the sermon in full. The manuscript has just been received in New York. The Doctor, in a letter to a friend in this city, says he spent his last Christmas holidays in its preparation, and he prays God's blessing to go with its publication.—PUBS.]

Exodus xv.: 22-26, especially the last clause of 26th verse—"I am the Lord, thy healer."*

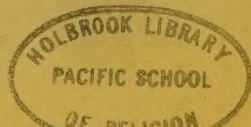
HERE, beneath the very shadows of Sinai, we have the gospel already in the Old Covenant, as truly comforting and supporting as anywhere in all the Bible. Well could the Lord in after ages say, "When Israel was a child I loved him; I led them with bands of love."—Hosea xi: 1-4. For here, at the very threshold of the wilderness, He meets them with the gracious assurance, *I am thy healer*.

How grandly was this gospel promise verified! At every step they took in their onward journey, the divine helps multiplied. The triumphant song over their miraculous deliverance at the Red Sea had scarcely died away, and their first sad experience of life in the wilderness had hardly been realized, when the Lord heals the bitter waters of Marah. Thence He leads them to the palm grove and refreshing fountains of Elim; thence on to Sin, "where the people asked, and God brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven." With unseen hands He had stretched "the bands of love" throughout the wilderness, along which He guides them in

"The fiery, cloudy pillar; "

seeking to heal them of their youthful arrogance and stubborn-

*The English version reads: "I am the Lord that healeth thee." Luther's version, which DR. CHRISTLIEB follows, reads, "*Ich bin der Herr dein Arzt*"—I am the Lord, thy *physician*. To retain the beautiful unity of this most excellent sermon, the translator has adopted the substantive instead of the verbal form of St. James' version, which is also in consonance with the Hebrew text. The terms "healer," "helper," and "physician" are used as synonyms.—*Transl.*



ness. And in order that they might clearly perceive that His mercies and His judgments alike aimed at the healing of their spiritual maladies, He gives them, at the very outset of their pilgrimage, if they would but obey His voice, the abiding, comforting assurance, "*I am the Lord, thy healer.*" As if He would say: My child, in this wearisome journey thou wilt often be foot-sore; but I am thy healer. Often thou wilt suffer from hunger and thirst; the sun will smite thee by day, and the moon by night; but I am thy healer. Enemies, mighty and many, will assail to wound and to bruise thee; but I am thy healer, thy hope, thy help.

How well, beloved, was this wilderness adapted to train, as in a school, a young, arrogant nation into obedience to God, and trust in His word. Here, without the intervention of second causes, they were absolutely thrown upon God's mercy, and had to derive, each morning, their daily subsistence from the dew of His love.

Is it otherwise with us, beloved? Do not we realize the same gracious interpositions of the Almighty? Has not the same unseen hand stretched "the bands of love" along our paths? At the very entrance of our life-pilgrimage, does He not meet us with His grace, in holy baptism, and say: "*I am the Lord, thy healer?*" In all the loving as well as chastening dispensations of His providence, does He not aim to heal the maladies of our hearts? O, that we might never forget, whenever we come to our Marahs, and taste their bitter waters, this consoling truth, that He is our healer!

But is this truth, that we are *really being healed*, manifested in our lives? Do we, in our needs, hasten at once to this healing Lord? Are His disciplines of "goodness and severity" restoring us to spiritual health? Alas! Alas! Look out upon the present Israel in the wilderness—Christendom; how sick, how very sick, the whole yet appears. How many have hewed them out numerous cisterns in the wilderness, who, nevertheless, with Israel of old, still cry, "What shall we drink?" They quaff one cup of pleasure after another, and perceive not the poison in the chalice. Their thirst is only aggravated; their condition becomes increasingly more hopeless and helpless; whilst—strange delusion!—they regard themselves as perfectly sound. Surveying our times and the world at large—Christendom and heathendom, church and state, home and family, ourselves and others—one may well exclaim with Isaiah: "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint."

Listen, then, ye ailing, though pretending hale ones; ye pilgrims in the wilderness, whether your sojourn in it has only been three days or forty years; and ye, too, my countrymen, who have tasted something of the bitterness of exile in the land of strangers, listen to-day to the gospel of Marah: "*I am*

the Lord, thy healer." Every word of this gospel is full of grace, and power, and comfort. The Lord will *Himself* be our healer; is *to-day*; is your and my *special* healer; is in very truth the *healer*, who is fully adequate to all our maladies.

Let us then refresh and strengthen ourselves, as we meditate on *Marah's Gospel*:

"I AM THE LORD, THY HEALER."

We consider—

I. That here all other help is excluded: "*I am the Lord, thy healer.*"

II. That this help is of perpetual continuance: "*I am the Lord, thy healer.*"

III. That it is both of universal and special application: "*I am the Lord, thy healer.*"

IV. That it is irrevocably pledged, and demands, therefore, our fullest confidence: "*I am the Lord, thy healer.*"

Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for this precious truth! Preach it here to-day, as first at Marah, and may this gospel, like the breath of life, penetrate and permeate all ailing hearts and homes. Lord, our complaints are so many and grievous, that Thou canst make Thy name renowned in our midst. Thou knowest them all better than we do ourselves. O, produce within us the conviction that we need a physician, and enable us to seek and find our remedy in Thee and Thy dear Son, that we may exultingly say, "Through His wounds we are healed!" Amen.

I. "*I am the Lord, thy healer.*"

If we place the emphasis here, where God himself, because of His incomparableness, has placed it, we shall at once perceive that all other help or healing is here excluded. Israel had probably sought and expected help from Moses. And no wonder. A three days' journey in the wilderness, beneath a scorching sun and over burning sand, with waning strength of man and beast, was no ordinary trial; when, lo! they came to Marah. Water! water! is the tumultuous exclamation that echoes through Israel's camp. All rush to the fountain, when—O, cruel disappointment!—"the people could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter." Sadness succeeds gladness—disappointment, transport. With murmurs long and loud the people turn to Moses, and despairingly ask, "What shall we drink?" "Man's extremity is God's opportunity," and the Lord, in answer to Moses' cries, sweetens the bitter waters by means of a tree.

The Lord was the healer, and the Lord exclusively. This is the first truth taught in the gospel of Marah: a truth, by the way, not easily learned. For how many and various are the

contrivances to which men resort—and even Christian men—before they learn this divine exclusiveness of help asserted in the text.

No man is without some healer or helper. Somehow, somewhere, he seeks for deliverance and comfort, be it in himself or in others. And to what sorry helpers he often resorts with his heart troubles! How little, after all, has the world learned to go directly to the living God for help. When men come to their Marah in any need or bitterness of life, what do they do? Just see. Yonder kneels the besotted heathen before his dumb idol, and *that* shall help him; or he runs to some priest, or wizard, or juggler, and they shall help him; or he plunges into some sacred stream, tortures or lacerates his body, or “offers his first born for the sins of his soul;” and all this shall deliver him from guilt and perdition!

And how is it in Christian lands? Alas! Here the ointment for their wounded hearts is sought in haunts of pleasure, in convivial clubs, in diverting comedies, in amusing stories, in art galleries, in operatic entertainments; *these* shall divert, deliver, help, heal! Men everywhere act as though it had never been proclaimed, “*I, the Lord, am thy healer.*” In the lazarus-house of this world one plague-patient seeks help of another, and if any one essays to deliver himself, it only proves that self-help is self-destruction. And why? Because all these helps and helpers are not adequate to the terrible malady that afflicts the race. So men have found it. So God has declared it. “Thus saith the Lord: Thy bruise is incurable, thy wound grievous. There is none to plead thy cause, that thou mayest be bound up; thou hast no healing medicines.”—Jer. xxx: 12, 13. The whole world contains not within itself a single drop of cooling water to quench the thirst of the soul, or to penetrate to the burning conscience. The incessant cry, therefore, continues: “What shall we drink?”

Marah’s sad experience is daily renewed. Water is at hand, but it quenches no thirst. Moses is near, but Moses alone is helpless. Self-upbraiding and murmurs abound, but deliverance comes not. World-help, human-help, self-help—all are inadequate.

By what right, now, can God claim this exclusive title of helper or healer? His *name* already, “*the Lord*,” implies it. “*I am Jehovah*”—*i. e.*, not only the Almighty, to whom nothing is impossible; nor simply the Omniscient, who thoroughly understands the nature and extent of all human complaints; but also the “Faithful and True,” who will reveal Himself to thee—set thee apart for his people, and who is, even now, ready to enter into covenant with thee.

But His *deeds*, as well as His name, entitle Him to this exclusive right as helper or healer. With an outstretched arm

He had just delivered Israel from Pharoah's hand. Through the healing of the waters at Marah He had renewedly demonstrated that he controlled the forces of nature; and that in special needs he could provide special helps. And who, we may well ask, had, from the beginning, cared for the fallen race? Who was, even now, gradually developing the great redemptive scheme, by the selection and training of a particular race and people? Was it not He alone?

But how much greater is God's right *now* to this exclusive title in the text? After the bitter waters of sin had flooded the earth, and one generation after another had drank its death-draught from the polluted stream, then he selected another tree and put that into the waters, and the curse and wrath-producing waters of sin were converted into streams of salvation. It was the cross of Christ, the only green branch on the dead tree of humanity. This did He and He alone, the Holy, the Triune God. Now the invitation, sweet as angel music, resounds through this wilderness world: "If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink." Whenever now a soul drinks of this fountain, opened in Christ the Lord, so that it thirsts not again—*i. e.*, is truly healed—there God has been the physician through His Son, His Word, and His Spirit.

In administering the saving means, God employs, indeed, human instrumentality, as Moses at Marah, but the specifically efficacious healing power is always He, His Word, His Spirit, His grace, His peace. So that, in view of all this, God can now, with infinitely greater reason than at Marah, stand before mankind, and assert with unwonted emphasis: "*I, I alone, am your healer;*" and century after century of redemptive history responds with one loud, prolonged *Yea* and *Amen*.

Have we learned this, and do we fully appreciate it? Physicians dislike, when, along with them, we secretly call in others for consultation. The Heavenly Physician dislikes it as well. And yet so many "halt between two opinions;" so many human devices are resorted to, that the divine remedy is either greatly impeded, or rendered nugatory altogether. It is, therefore, no matter of astonishment that so much spiritual ailment abounds everywhere, and also here among you. O, my countrymen! you who seek deliverance by so many whom the Lord has not appointed as healers of your deepest sores, would that I could publish it in all your homes and hamlets, along all your hills and valleys, that *One* is your helper. High above all controversial strifes and animosities, He stands to-day before you, beholding all your secret woes and unsoftened wounds, saying: "*I am thy physician.*" Acknowledge Him at last as your exclusive Saviour; flee with all your sufferings and sorrows to His peace-bestowing wounds, and your entire restoration is accomplished.

2. But there are yet many other springs of truth and comfort issuing from this Gospel of Marah. A new one is indicated in the *perpetual continuance of this Divine help*. "I AM," says the Lord, "*thy healer*;" am it always, and will continue to be it forever more. Human physicians come and go for awhile, and then either death or recovery ends their visits. The malady of the human race, however, as it has existed from the beginning of time, and will continue to the consummation of all things, needs an eternally abiding help. Here all things change, except sin; it has an obstinately tenacious existence, and transmits its blighting life from generation to generation. Hence has this little word, "I *am*," not yet passed away. High above all times and changes, thrones He who uttered it; before whom is no past nor future, but who surveys all in one eternal "Now;" who was, and is, and is to come, and who, therefore, can always continue to say: "I *am* the Lord, thy healer." He was it from the beginning, is it now, and ever shall continue to be it, world without end.

He continued to be Israel's helper. Else why does He not say, Behold I *was* thy healer; was it *just now*. Why, "*am*?" Because He wishes to intimate that He purposes to *remain* such. And this our text specifically confirms. "*There He made for them a statute and an ordinance; and then He proved them and said: If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, then will I put none of these diseases upon thee, which I brought upon the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, thy healer.*" It was, you perceive, to be an ordinance and a statute forever, including on the one hand the leading them to the bitter waters from which nature recoils; but, on the other hand, also, the sweetening, the restorative efficacy of this water, redemption. That shall be a statute for God's Israel of all times, for all his children of all ages, "who diligently hearken to the voice of their Lord," so that they may definitely reckon on the Divine help.

How often was this firm and unalterable statute verified in Israel's history. Marah was but the beginning of the wilderness, not the end. And how faithfully did God continue their physician in all their wanderings! His face shone upon them from the pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night; it was the visible pledge of His ever gracious presence. And O! how comforting for them in all their needs to see and to say: Yonder, in the front of the long, long procession, is the pledge of our help, the Angel of the Covenant!

Kings and princes usually take their family physician with them on their journeys. Israel had its physician along, both for body and soul. It was led and accompanied by Him who had said, "I *am* and remain the Lord, thy physician." And

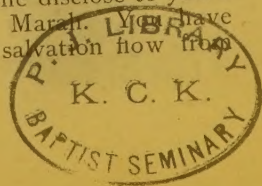
whenever, in its subsequent history, even after long-continued faithlessness and monstrous iniquity, Israel cried unto the Lord in its sorest needs and greatest oppressions, becoming again obedient unto Him, the sweet truth was renewed by: "I am thy healer."

Is the case different at present? This holy sanctuary, this quiet Sabbath hour, this sacred volume, which, thank God, shines to-day like "the fiery, cloudy pillar" all along our pilgrimage through this wilderness world, all demonstrate the perpetually enduring force of this word "*am*." It is felt in the healing power of the Cross to-day, and it will continue to be felt to the end of time. And when time shall be no more, this self-same power shall stand out in all its fullness and majesty, in glory everlasting. In all the history of the past, where is there a single soul that humbly sought and believingly applied its healing efficacy, was either disappointed or rejected? Who can count the hearts it has quieted, the tears it has dried, the consciences it has unburdened, the soul-hunger and thirst it has satisfied?

Ah yes! This joyous news is still true. The Gospel of Marah still sounds forth its glad tidings. It has been clearly interpreted, graciously extended, mightily strengthened, amazingly deepened, and unshakenly established by the Gospel of Calvary. Its expiring victim, despite thy waywardness, is still "thy Healer," thy Saviour. And He remains such as long as "repentance and forgiveness of sin are preached in His name among all nations." His power is not limited. His arm is not shortened, that it cannot help. His kingdom increases, and with it the means of help.

And mark! whether thou recognizest the fact or not, He, unseen, has attended, with His gracious aid, each step of thy life-journey. As in Israel's case, thou had Him ever near thee. And this day thou mayest come to Him; and having been accepted, thou mayest come again and again. After each sin, each misstep, run to Him at once and say: Now Lord, more than ever Thou, and Thou *alone*, art my healer. O, neglect not the day of grace. It lasts long, but it has its limits for each one; else thou mayest knock in vain for admission when once the door is shut. Only to those that obey His voice it lasts forever; to such it is continued through the dark valley of the shadow of death, and will be perpetuated in the city of our God, when the mighty Helper and Healer, Jesus Christ, shall lead His flock "unto living fountains of water," and "unto the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations."

3. Or does any doubt in the ability of this physician to heal just *your* sickness hinder you? Then let me disclose to you a new spring of comfort in the Gospel of Marah. You have already seen how copiously the streams of salvation flow from



"*I am*;" but richer, fuller still, they issue from the little word, "THY healer," "*I am the Lord, THY healer*;"—a word as *comforting in its general as in its specific application*.

In its *general application*. For whom is it intended? Beyond all controversy, for the entire Israel of God, of both the Old and the New Testament; for all, therefore, who are willing to obey the voice of the Lord their God.

Let me ask: What are *your* ailments from which Israel did not suffer? Instability? Who was more unstable than Israel? Is it the diabolical trinity of this world: The lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life? Who has ever excelled Israel in all these? Is it covetousness? Who has ever paid greater devotion at Mammon's shrine than ancient or modern Israel? Is it pride, or self-righteousness? Where has that bitter root ever produced more offensive blossoms and fruits than in the heart of Israel? Look only at the Pharisees of ancient time, or at the self-conceited, knowledge-inflated, culture-puffed Jew of the present. Or is it ingratitude and unbelief? Who fell away from God so easily and so often; and where, in all this wide, wide world, did the basest ingratitude of man to God ever reach such towering heights as when Israel led forth the Lamb of God, the embodied light of the world, to be crucified? And yet it was to this people—so wayward, so lustful, so proud, so thankless, so base, all the thoughts of whose heart the omniscient God well knew—that He said: "*I am thy healer*." What an amazing revelation here of mercy and truth, of wisdom and grace, of long suffering and infinite forbearance, in order that God might proclaim Himself to such a people and for all time to come: "*I am thy healer*." And how much grace and truth, love and compassion, might and light, are contained, too, in that announcement for *you*! Call your ailments what you please—be your sins of deepest dye and blackest hue, of personal or relative nature, of family or business character, to-day God announces Himself as your physician, and invites you thereby to become His patients; to commit yourselves to His treatment. Ye, then, whose hearts are becoming petrified in the service of mammon and through the deceitfulness of riches; ye whom appetite and lust have bound as with chains of iron; ye whom the inveterate canker of self-righteousness and pride is consuming; ye whom Satan is beguiling with indifference, from whose faith he is stealing its strength, from whose love its ardor, from whose hope its brightness; who are becoming spiritual consumptives, being neither cold nor hot—lukewarm; ye, of whatever state, shade, or condition of ailment, who are "full of wounds and bruises and putrifying sores;" ye are the ones to whom the heavenly physician says: "*I can and will heal you*." Oh, blessed amplitude! oh, glorious universality! contained in the promise, "*I am thy healer*!"

Not less comforting, however, is the *specific application* of it:

Not every physician is adequate to every disease. Often a patient must hear: "I am in this instance not your man; go to another, who has made your particular class of complaints a specialty." And when, then, that other one can say: "Yes, I am your man; I understand your case thoroughly;" how comforting!

This comfort, too, is contained in Marah's Gospel. "I am *thy* healer;" *specifically* and *particularly* THINE.

Sin, the great malady of the race, is in its essence and nature the same; but its developments are different in different men. There is, therefore, a certain degree of propriety in the sinner's question: "Can this Physician help me? Because He has helped others, does it follow thence that I can be restored by Him?" To this question the text replies: Yes! "I am *thy* healer." I know all about thy case. Like a faithful family physician, I have watched thee from thine infancy. I know thy constitution and all the mischief that lurks within thee, as no one else. Just *thy* peculiarity is *My* specialty. And My treatment of thy case shall demonstrate over again, that I rightfully claim to be "The Lord, *thy* healer."

He surely was the right physician for Israel's complaints. His wonderful display of wisdom, of long-suffering and loving-kindness, of severity and lenity, of faithfulness and compassion, which characterize the whole history of Israel, furnish the competent demonstration, that God thoroughly understood their case.

And so is it with all. He knows precisely what to do and when to do it. One heart He melts with love, another He breaks with severity; here he rouses one slumbering conscience with the terrors of the law; there, like the good Samaritan, he pours into its burning wounds the oil of the Gospel; here He subdues a haughty spirit with the rod of affliction; there he raises up a weeping Magdalene with tenderest compassion. And as He fully understands the seat, compass, and virulence of the disease, so He thoroughly comprehends the symptoms of its inner crisis—the moment of conversion; and in the process of convalescence He selects, with infinite precision, the most approved means for the complete restoration of the patient. And as the omniscient Lord of all, He knows what influence surrounding circumstances exert upon each one of us; He selects and orders them in such a way as may be most convenient and helpful to all that have committed themselves to Him for treatment. Hence the checkered scenes, otherwise often inexplicable, that characterize their history.

And just here, He shows Himself the master in helping and healing, that, amid the vast concerns of universal empire, He

bestows His special care, skill, and attention upon every single individual that has employed Him as his physician. O! thou ailing, anxious, troubled soul, He that knows thee as no one else; that loves thee as no one else; that bruises and wounds, but also heals and comforts, as no one else; *He is thy helper, thy healer.* And notwithstanding all thy waywardness and infidelities, thy heedlessness and insults, He has never left thee, remains thy physician still, and will continue to be until He has placed thee beyond all danger.

4. For He pledges Himself, in the last word of the text, to your complete restoration, when He says; "*I am the Lord, thy HEALER.*" And herewith I open to you all the sluices of comfort contained in Marah's Gospel.

God's help is irrevocably pledged, and demands therefore our fullest confidence.

As a sinner, fear might naturally deter a man from committing himself to this daily care and *nursing* attention of God. But bear in mind, He announces Himself here not as Judge, but as Physician. A physician comes to the patient, even though his disease should have been contracted by utter wantonness; he comes not to chide nor to punish, but to heal. So our Lord; as the parable of the prodigal son abundantly shows. To him, therefore, who is wont to think of God only as a Sovereign and Judge, He says, to-day; "My child, think of Me first as a physician. I must heal the mighty malady that afflicts the race; therefore, I go after the lost sheep until I find it; and when found, it is not to pelt and abuse it, but to bind up its wounds, and to lay it on my shoulders and carry it back to the fold." Dwell upon this picture until your tuned heart exultingly exclaims: "My Lord and my God! Thou wilt not destroy, but save me."

And to this fact he is *irrevocably pledged*.

He is the "faithful and true" God, who cannot lie. And He has established this *statute* or *ordinance* for all time to come. Israel found Him faithful and true in all its history. And this truth is even more firmly pledged in *Christ Jesus*, whose very name is, Saviour of His people. And the first great comfort contained in this announcement is, *Help is possible*. All other physicians may despair of your case; He does not. When He says, "*I am thy healer,*" he pledges, in that statement, His word, His honor, His saving name. Nor can your fears, or the inveteracy and imminent danger of your complaint, weigh aught against this. Dangerous cases are sometimes coveted by able physicians, for in them their skill and name can be made illustrious. Granted, then, that yours is a desperate case; His skill and ability are equal to it. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Where sin abounded,

grace did much more abound." To-day he says: As Moses healed the waters of Marah by means of a tree, so I heal thee by my cross. Only acknowledge thy transgressions; only come unto Me for help; and through My wounds thou mayest be made whole.

To the blessed assurance that help is possible, the Lord adds a second comfort, namely: *The means of help are already prepared.* And this fact gives to the little word, "healer," such deep significance, and confirms the divine statute and ordinance so irrevocably, that any doubt in reference thereto becomes a flagrant wrong.

Human remedies must first be provided; the Lord's are already at hand, and they are thus set forth and offered us by the apostle: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. . . . We pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." What countless souls have already been healed of their complaints by this precious truth of God's grace in Christ Jesus! How many burdened, wounded consciences has it already healed, forever healed! And why not yours? The erected cross is the embodied will of God, that all men should be saved (1 Tim. ii: 4). And should you alone be excluded? The redeemed of all ages testify before the throne of God on high, that they have been healed and washed in the blood of the Lamb; and should God and man, heaven and earth, history and experience, be insufficient to satisfy you of the firm, irrevocable pledge of the Lord, that He is your helper, your healer, your Saviour!

To render this help, however, available, He, as is the case with human physicians, demands your *confidence and obedience*. And why should this demand occasion you any difficulty? We put confidence in a physician who devotes himself conscientiously and entirely to the duties of his profession. And is not this true of our heavenly Physician? Though exalted high above all principalities and powers, the great redemption work is the one controlling element in the government of His vast empire, and everything in it is made subservient to the recovery of the human race. Extended experience is another element of confidence in a physician. Our "Healer" has the experience of an hundred centuries on His side. Other physicians have often great difficulty in ascertaining the seat and nature of a disease; they are frequently deceived, and select the wrong medicines, so that many a one, like the woman in the gospel, suffers many things of many physicians, and is nothing better, but rather grows worse. But our Physician's eye penetrates to the deepest recesses of the soul, and all things lie naked and

open to His view. In His prolonged and widely extended practice, He has never yet lost a single case, where the patient himself did not wilfully withdraw from His treatment. Is not such a physician entitled to the fullest confidence?

More still. If a physician were at the same time master over the lives and deaths of his patients, what could be more agreeable to him or them? How would the whole world run after such a man! Now the Healer of Marah can say, "I am *the Lord*, thy healer." The question of life and death is at His disposal. Says Job: "Thou has granted me life, and Thy visitation preserveth my spirit." He holds the keys of death and the grave in His hands. Should not He have our implicit confidence?

Nor can His willingness to help be questioned any more than His power. Suppose a physician, in order to save his patient, should transfer the disease of the ailing one to himself, and die in his stead, could any one doubt his willingness to save his patient? That is just what the Lord, thy healer, has done. "Surely, He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and by His stripes we are healed." Such was His interest in your recovery, that He submitted to death itself for your sakes.

Besides, in the employment of human physicians the rule is: the longer the services the greater the bill; and no little anxiety is often occasioned by this fact. But how stands the case here? "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." I ask, with great emphasis: Does not the "Lord, your healer," with such ability and with such a disposition, deserve your confidence? O! why does not all the world run after Him?

Why? Because there is something in his method of treatment which men dislike—*the obedience He demands*.

Confidence in a physician is tested by following his orders; and this for many a patient is not an easy matter; because so many things are prohibited to which he was accustomed, and in their stead so many bitter medicines are prescribed. Thus, too, the physician at Marah first led to the bitter waters and then to the sweet. He first probes the wound, then heals it. "He maketh sore, and then bindeth up; He woundeth, and His hands make whole." First the bitter tears of repentance, then the sweet experience of grace and peace. First into the Valley of Humiliation, then to the Delectable Mountains. Thus the very beginning of the Divine restorative method is offensive to the natural heart, and demands unquestioned confidence and obedience, without any consultation with flesh and blood.

And then the convalescent is further instructed to avoid everything that would cause a relapse—to walk in the new life, upon the narrow way, to crucify the flesh, to deny the world ; all which demands steadfastness in obedience to and confidence in the Divine Healer, in order that, as He has commenced the good work in him, He may also complete it.

Hence says God to His people at Marah : “ *If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee which I have brought upon the Egyptians.*” What dire calamities and sufferings would Israel have avoided had it heeded this counsel and walked in the ways of its God.

This, too, beloved, is the rule for each one of us to-day, who has committed himself to the Divine Healer for treatment ; only we see clearly that the way we have to take is Christ and His example ; the support on which we rely is Christ and His spirit ; and the aim and object of our way is Christ and His glory. And, therefore, all the commandments to be obeyed by us are compressed into this one : “ *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house.*”

My dear hearers, would you be entirely healed ? Then remain in Christ’s treatment. The beginning may be bitter ; the progress will become increasingly easier, sweeter, happier ; so that, by-and-by, you will be able to say : “ His commandments are not grievous.” Love makes them easy and clear. Should you at times not understand the mysterious ways He leads you, nor comprehend His methods of healing many of your complaints, run not away from Him to other physicians. Be assured that He knows. Should His hand seem sometimes against you, His heart is always for you. Your whole course of life will only become intelligible to you in the light of this Gospel of Marah, when, with all your heart, you have learned to believe, *The Lord is my healer*, and He seeks by all He sends me to cure my sin-sick soul. Humbly and confidently submit to His direction ; nor seek to restrain His hand should He reach for the knife to prune the branch, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Try not, secretly, to associate with Him the world as a subordinate helper. Remember, he is thy healer exclusively. Many physicians are often death to the patient. To serve two masters is the clearest proof of the unfitness of the servant. Give Him not only a part, but your entire confidence. For He has irrevocably pledged to you complete restoration.

After the waters of Marah had been sweetened, the invitation echoed through the whole camp : “ Come and drink ! ” Doubtless, it was cheerfully, gratefully accepted. Let the Gospel of Marah, to-day, blend in the Gospel of Christ : “ Who-

soever thirsteth, let him come unto Me and drink." For all your complaints, here is the Physician. I place Him before you, that He Himself may preach to you as at Nazareth, His home: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised." "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." And whosoever has come to this fountain, and has drunk from it life and health, let him say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, * * * who healeth all thy diseases." AMEN.

The Unknown God.

A SERMON

By **Rev. J. P. Newman, D.D.**, DELIVERED IN THE METROPOLITAN M. E. CHURCH, WASHINGTON, D. C., FEBRUARY 18, 1877.

"For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription: To the unknown God."—Act, xvii: 23.

SOME truths are as old as time, and lasting as eternity. Foremost among such is the existence of a Supreme Being, the Creator of all things. Whatever may be the origin of the thought, the doctrine is as prevalent as the habitations of man. Whether we go to countries the most enlightened, or countries the most debased, there the idea prevails. Whether this idea is intuitional, or traditional, or rational, that is, discoverable by reason, or whether it is a matter of pure revelation, are points of dispute between us and the infidel. The question, then, is one of essential importance; but there is another of equal importance, and, I may say, of greater vitality, namely, What is God? What is His character? What are His attributes? What are His relations to man and man's relation to Him? Is He our friend or our foe? If our friend, how can His love be reciprocated? If our foe, how can His wrath be appeased? If He is a being to be perpetually trusted, how may we ascertain that fact, and cultivate that trust so that it will impart to the human soul a sweet repose? How can we know Him? If there is a God—and who doubts it?—if there is a Being high over all—and who can question it?—the practical and vital question is, how may you and I, as the offspring of His power, and the objects of His regard, how may we know God, in the truest sense of that term? Know Him as our father and our friend; know Him as our Judge, know Him as our preserver, and, finally, and above all, know Him as our Saviour, who will impart unto us the impulses of a new life. The text is remarkable for two things: First, for its knowledge; and secondly, for its ignorance. Its knowledge consists in this, that an altar in Athens was erected to God. The ignorance consists in this, that that altar was erected to an unknown God. As to the historic fact, that such an altar existed, I need not delay you for a moment to dispute, for Pausanias is sufficient authority on this question; and to doubt his observation touching this fact, is to doubt all the other observations of that distinguished traveler.

Then we accept the statement in the text as a fact, "As I passed by and beheld your devotions, I saw an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown God.'"

In speaking to you on this important subject, I desire to make three points: First, that God is unknown to all who have

not the Bible; secondly, that He is unknown to all who do not believe in Jesus Christ; and thirdly, He is unknown to all who do not personally accept Christ as their Redeemer. There are three sources of information touching this subject—intuition, the light of nature, and the light of revelation. It becomes us, in approaching the *finale* of the subject, to ascertain or examine these three sources of information. Each theory is defended by men of renown and learning.

The question of intuition amounts to this, that the idea of God is native to the human mind; native in the sense that mind is so constructed that it operates in obedience to such laws, that whenever mind comes into existence it conceives by intuition the idea of God. In other words, that, had Adam and Eve been left to themselves, without a personal visitation from God, they would have conceived the idea of the existence of their Supreme Creator. This is the theory; this is the assertion; this is the illustration. But it seems to me there is this fatal answer to the theory of intuition, namely, that all that could have been conceived by our first parents, had they been left without a personal visitation from God, is simply this, they would have realized, nay, they would have been conscious of the fact, that there was a time when they did not exist; in other words, their existence had had a commencement; and if their existence had a commencement, the same must have been *caused*. This mode of reasoning would not have led them to the Creator, but to the relation of cause and effect; and this to a succession of causes and effects, and that succession *eternal*. So it was with the best of the Greek philosophers, who asserted the eternity of matter, out of which all things were made.

That the human mind has not innate ideas of God is illustrated in the case of Peter, the wild boy, found in the woods of Germany at the beginning of the last century.

But were this idea innate, could the unaided mind reason out the attributes of the Deity? The affirmative argument runs thus: I feel myself hemmed in, limited in the use of all my powers of mind and body. I am shut up within the finite, and realize that I am finite. Now, this sense of limitation, it is said, suggests the idea of the Infinite. My own scanty knowledge and feeble energies throw me upon the contemplation of omniscience and omnipotence, and lift me up to the great idea of a God in whom these great attributes reside.

This is what is called idealizing—the exercise of the imagination. But history is in proof, that the man who attempts to draw an ideal God, the character of that God resembles the character of the man by whom it is drawn. He is ready to love and willing to worship such a God. The idealized

God of the ancient Scandinavian was "Thor, the god of battles and of plunder," and was worshipped by the Scandinavian warrior, who stood with a purse in one hand and a spear in the other. So with the Thugs of India, who worshipped Doorga, the goddess of vagabonds, thieves, and murderers, and who considered themselves as acting under her immediate influence. From her shrine they went to the highway, where they waylaid the traveler—whether saint or sinner, Hindoo or Mahomedan—demanded his purse, and on refusal, took his life.

So it was with the Greeks, of whom I am speaking this morning. Take the Grecian Olympus, wherein were gods and goddesses representing every human passion—revenge, envy, jealousy, and war. All the baser passions of human nature were embodied in some god or goddess. Mars was the god of war and blood, Mercury the god of thieves, Bacchus the god of drunkards. Some of their festal scenes cannot be described in a presence so refined and morally beautiful as this. The classical scholar here to-day recalls them with a shudder. Once a year, in everything that was degrading to man and degrading to woman, these terrible revels were carried on the livelong night. And the same thing is true in regard to some of the Jews, for Jehovah had to say to them: "Thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself." They were thieves, adulterers, and slanderers, and thought God was like themselves. This has been the weakness of mankind all through the history of the race, namely, creating a god resembling the individual man; and it is to be feared that the idealizing is characteristic of the Christian Church—that men draw their ideal of God independent of that old Book; and the god of many a Christian man and woman resembles himself or herself—in prejudices, in castes, in envies, in dispositions, and in inclinations. I tell you, my friends, it is to us a tremendous fact, that the human heart is desperately wicked, and is deceitful above all things; and the very god that you to-day bow down before is a god of your own creation. You cannot find the correspondent of your ideal in that inspired volume. Read that Book, and the scales will fall from your eyes as they fell from the eyes of Saint Paul, who thought that he was doing God's service when he murdered the men and women and children that followed the Lord Jesus Christ. The individual cannot rise above his idealized god. He must change himself to raise himself to a higher plain of moral excellence. We may go further and say, that a people, having received by revelation a knowledge of God, but now destitute of that Book, may forget Him, may reach a state when He will be unto them "an unknown God." This is true of the Chinese.

Now, it is a fact, and it is one of those facts which are sustained by history and by observation, that without the presence

of a Divine revelation a people cannot form a correct conception of God, and cannot preserve the same without Divine aid.

The other source of information to which I alluded is a speculative philosophy. It cannot be denied that the Greeks had that. Indeed, it culminated in their palmiest days. We must remember that some of the most gigantic minds of the human race lived in the age to which I now refer. Plato had certainly some noble conceptions of God; but with those conceptions he also had errors—errors which underlie the beautiful conceptions of the Deity which he entertained. It should be remembered that the God of Moses had been known all through Greece, and all through the Roman empire; but here was a man independent of revelation, trying by his philosophical speculations to form an ideal of the character and attributes of Jehovah. What is Plato's testimony? It is this: "God, fortune, and opportunity govern all the affairs of man." And what is the statement of Seneca? It is simply this: That "Evil things happen to good men, because God, the Great Artificer, could not change matter; that many things were made ill by the Great Artificer, not that He wanted art, but through the stubbornness of matter."

Both Plato and Seneca taught the eternity of matter. The sublime man of the Academy—and who else is more sublime among the sons of men than old Plato?—with his splendid intellect, reaches this conclusion, namely, the eternity of matter, and that the affairs of men are governed by God, fortune, and opportunity; so that, according to this theory, divine Providence over all things is excluded. And prayer is excluded; for who would offer a prayer unto him who is a co-partner with blind fortune and inconstant opportunity?

It was in the year 54 that St. Paul landed in Athens, then the most splendid city in the world. But at that time Athens was given to idolatry. In the Athenian Olympus were included gods, superior and inferior, represented in the Agora, or the beautiful forum, that was between the Acropolis and Mars Hill. There were statues to Jupiter and Apollo, to Bacchus and Saturn, to Mars and Mercury, to Venus and Vesta, to Minerva and Diana. And these Greeks were not satisfied with embodying their ideals in statues and in altars, but they must go further, and deify their heroes, Hercules and Theseus, Cadmus and Cecrops. They must go still further, and embody abstractions, and altars were erected to Fame, to Fortune, to Energy, to Persuasion, and to Pity. It was in that Agora that Paul met the philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoics. There he encountered them; there they engaged him in argument; and from there they took him to Mars Hill, that he might have a hearing before the highest tribunal of the Greeks, upon the accusation of being a "setter forth of strange gods."

The seat of supreme justice was on Mars Hill, so called from the legend, that on that hill Mars had been tried, by a court of twelve gods, for the murder of a son of Neptune. The Areopagus, in the days of Paul, as it had been in the past, was regarded as the supreme and most impartial tribunal in Greece. For of that court it had been said, that, "Innocence, when summoned before it, appeared without apprehension, and the guilty, convicted and condemned, retired without a murmur." The judges sat in the open air, upon seats hewn out of the native rock. The advocates were not allowed to appeal to pity or aversion. The parties arraigned were obliged to add to their oaths the most solemn imprecations upon themselves and families, that they would tell the truth. And to deepen the solemnity of the scene, at the base of Mars Hill was the cave or temple of the infernal furies, into whose hands the culprit was committed.

Upon that hill, before that court, the friendless apostle stood. On his right hand were the honey-glades of Hymettus; on his left were the white marble quarries of Pentelicus; before him was the Acropolis, covered with shrines to Bacchus, Æsculapius, Venus, Earth, and Ceres. On the brow of the hill was the temple of "Wingless Victory;" and covering the summit of the Acropolis was the fane of Minerva, surmounted with the colossal bronze statue of the goddess, armed with spear, shield, and helmet, looking down into the very eye of the friendless apostle.

Before him were the twelve judges, one of whom was Dionysius, whose name abides in Christian history. Around him were the philosophers of the Epicureans, who denied the immortality of the soul and a future judgment; and also philosophers of the Stoics, who deified reason, and taught that a pleasure was not a good; that pain was not an evil; while among the crowd was Damaris and other Christian women, and many people that worshipped at the various shrines of Athens.

Such were the surroundings and the audience at the trial of this grand man. And now see with what skill, directness, and fidelity he declares the truth, and says: "As I passed through your city, I beheld an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown God.'" And then, taking this for his text, he proceeds at once to declare that God.

And, first of all, he announces that "God made the world, and all things therein." Those philosophers had denied the creation of matter by the Infinite; had asserted the eternity of matter. But Paul says, "God, who made the world, and all things therein."

Nor was this enough; for he also declares His supreme and universal sovereignty in the words: "He is Lord of heaven and of earth." They had gods many, and lords many; but he

would draw them from their idolatrous shrines, to that Being whose throne is on the circle of the heavens, who "binds the sweet influences of the Pleiades," and "guides Arcturus, with his sons."

Nor is this enough; but he now passes to the attributes, and declares the divine ubiquity. Waving his hand over those idol shrines that came within his purview, he said: "But He dwelleth not in temples made with hands." God is ubiquitous, and is not confined to shrines and temples.

Then he goes on to declare that God is the preserver of all things: "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." Nay, He is a benefactor: "He giveth to all life and breath, and all things."

The very Greek philosophers, who stood near him, asserted that man was not created by Jehovah, but that the Greeks were self-produced, and they denied the unity of the human race; but Paul, surveying the sons of Attica, exclaimed: "He hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the earth," thus tracing our ancestral line back to a common fountain-head.

Is this all? Nay. God is not only creator, preserver, benefactor, ubiquitous, but also the judge, of all men. O, how those hearts must have trembled, as their intellects became illuminated by the assertion, that God "hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained." A judgment! Ah, yes! An Areopagus beyond the clouds, where One, greater than Dionysius, shall sit in judgment; where the ubiquitous One Himself shall be the solemn and inexorable judge. And the apostle reached his climax in the words, "By the Man whom He hath ordained," whose resurrection was the proof of the coming judgment.

The great sermon was ended. Some mocked; others proposed another hearing; the audience dispersed. But, see! On one of those stone benches sits Dionysius. His eye rests upon Paul; his heart has been touched. He believes in Paul's God, and accepts the Lord Jesus. So, among the Grecian women is Damaris. She, too, receives the Lord—Christ. Others are in tears; they linger around Paul, as he speaks of that mysterious altar, inscribed, "To the Unknown God."

As it is true of the past, so it is true of to-day. There are deists in our city; there are deists in this congregation. But, young gentlemen, you who are tempted to deism, that is, to the rejection of Jesus Christ as the manifestation of God in the flesh, let me give you the testimony of the keenest mind of this century, a man who was an unbeliever like yourself; a man who has written on this subject. Let me give you his testimony touching the inability of mankind to form a conception of the character and attributes of God. I quote this from a recent work by John Stuart Mill. He says:

"The net results of the natural religion on the Divine attributes are these: A being of great but *limited* power, how or by what limited we cannot even conjecture; of great and, *perhaps*, unlimited intelligence; but, perhaps, also more *narrowly limited* than His power; who desires and pays *some* regard to the happiness of His creatures, but who seems to have *other motives* of actions which He cares *more* for; and who can hardly be supposed to have created the universe for that purpose alone. Such is the Deity whom natural religion points to, and any idea of God more captivating than this comes only from human wishes, or from the teachings of either real or imaginary revelations."

Thank you, Mr. Mill, thank you! There is the testimony of a logician, and such a logician as England may not see the like again for many a year, and a man who had given his utmost strength and attention to the investigation of this very subject: Whether human reason, unaided by revelation, is competent to discover the character and attributes, the will and relations, of the Infinite God; and he declares it is not possible even to determine whether this God of nature is omnipotent or not, and whether He is unlimited in intelligence or not. And now we go to that old Book; we turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the manifestation of God in the flesh, "in whom dwelleth the fullness of the God-head bodily," whose chief mission in coming into the world was to reveal the unseen and the unknown God to us, and to concentrate in Himself that God. I do not think that it derogates from this teaching to-day, that it is necessary for the human mind to have a concentration of the personality of the Infinite One. There was such a concentration when the rainbow was made to span the clouds. There was such a concentration when the Shekinah appeared in the Holy of Holies; and there was such a concentration when the Son of Mary came on earth—Jesus Christ, "Emanuel, God with us." Turn away from Him, philosophers, and you turn away from the greatest of teachers. Reject His revelation of the Father, and you worship the "unknown God." Refuse to accept His manifestation and you grope in darkness and stumble on the slippery rocks of unbelief.

And, lastly, inasmuch as God is unknown to those who have not the Bible, and to those who do not believe in Jesus Christ, so He is the "unknown God" to all who do not accept Christ as their personal and living Saviour. Of what avail, though you believe in your creed, "that God is glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders;" that He "upholdeth all things by the word of His power; that He heareth the raven when it cries; that He watcheth the sparrow when it falls." Of what avail, though you believe in His ubiquity, in His omnipotence;

that you believe He is the judge of the quick and the dead. There is something more than this. Nay; of what avail though you receive Christ, Son of the Father, the Only Begotten. Something else is necessary, brothers, that God shall no longer be the "unknown God" to you. You must know Him as loving, and as being loved. You must know Him as trusting, and being trusted. You must know Him as sin-pardoning; know Him as imparting peace to the mind, rest to the soul, beauty to life. You must know Him as Enoch knew Him; walking with Him in the utmost friendship, hand in hand, heart responding to heart in its beautiful pulsation, eyes looking in the same direction; so you can say, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth I desire beside Thee;" so you can say, with the apostle, "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

The most touching and beautiful illustration of the intimacy between God and the human soul, is the relation between husband and wife. They know each other's spirits, each other's characters, each other's loves, each other's interests, each other's jealousies, each other's aspirations, as no two other beings can know each other. They know all this in the truest and most beautiful sense in the world. And this beautiful, heaven-born relation between husband and wife is the illustration of the spiritual and intimate relation between man and God. O, brothers! let Him be no longer to you, the "unknown God." To-day, in your family, and around your hearth-stones, there is an altar, but on that altar is the inscription, "To the Unknown God." Aye! unknown to your heart of hearts, unknown to your experience, unknown to your aspirations, unknown to your better thoughts, unknown to your interests, that reach into eternity; unknown to Him as the sin-pardoning God, saving to the uttermost. The time of this ignorance must suffice. Go home, and erase the inscription, and write thereon, "To the known God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord." And then walking with God, as Enoch did, you shall ascend and approach the eternal gates, which are opened wide, and enter into the palace of eternity, there to live with Him forever more.

The Church—The Office of Elder.

A SERMON.

By Rev. John Hall, D.D., IN THE FIFTH AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
NEW YORK, MARCH 4TH, 1877.

'And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the Church.'—Acts of the Apostles xx: 17.

Also; *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood."*—Acts of the Apostles xx: 28.

If there are any of you, dear friends, who are solicitous to make yourselves thoroughly acquainted with your Bibles, and make that book a frequent and abiding visitor in your thoughts, you can adopt no better plan than to take one particular section of it and study it thoroughly. Take, for instance, this epistle to the Ephesians, and you have a basis for your thoughts, and then address yourselves to the history of the church to which the letter was sent, and then make yourselves familiar with the circumstances under which it was written, and then give another reading of the epistle in the light of the history with which you have obtained acquaintance, and, finally, follow out any movements or traces that may appear in the succeeding history of the people to whom the letter was written, and you will find that it has an intelligent and connected aspect in your minds which it never can have while we content ourselves with a hurried and miscellaneous reading of the Word as a whole.

These remarks will apply especially to such portions of Scripture as this address to the Church of Christ at Ephesus. This Church had the closest connection, in all its history, with the Apostle Paul. He made, in the first instance, a brief and hurried visit to Ephesus; he would have been glad to remain, and the people would have been glad to have him stay, but there was occasion for him to go elsewhere. It became necessary for him to go, leaving the work, in part, in the hands of Aquila and Priscilla, to whose assistance, at a later time, there came Apollos, who rendered valuable aid in the instruction and help of the infant church in that place. You are all aware of the fact that the dominant worship in this great city of Ephesus was that of Diana. Here was the temple, known to Bible readers as the "Temple of Diana at Ephesus." The immense temple erected to this goddess must have been a most striking object before the minds, and continually under the eyes, of the residents of that place, and so it is not in the least degree wonderful that there should have been so many allusions in the epistle to the Temple at Ephesus.

[At this point a lady, who was suddenly taken ill, was borne from the church, when the speaker said: "Brethren, with what solemnity ought we to hear the Word of the Lord, seeing with what startling suddenness our powers of hearing and understanding may be taken away."]

There seems to have been the strongest possible attachment between Paul, the Apostle, and the believers at Ephesus; his epistles are full of assertions of "abiding faith." There was no trouble to be got rid of, there was no sin to be reproved; and the result is, that he presents before them, in the most vivid way, the distinguishing glories of the great church, and seeing that their eyes must have been constantly resting upon that great architectural power—the Temple of Diana in their city—he makes many allusions, the obvious tendency of which is to turn the thoughts of his hearers from this to that nobler structure, of which Jesus Christ is the foundation, of which God is the builder, and of which all true, loving servants of God are living stones, constituting an integral part of it. Following this line of thought, he has occasion to speak in strongest terms of the safety of the Lord's people, and to give assurance that they shall be kept by Him who is interested in keeping the spiritual structure of which He has laid the foundation.

The epistle is about equally divided, the first-half being expended upon doctrinal statements, and the second half upon the Lord's people who have received the doctrines of the Lord Jesus Christ. Occasionally, in the epistle, we will see some allusion to the peculiar manner in which the church was founded. When Paul stayed a period of more than two years in the city of Ephesus, he had opportunity, for the first three months, to give instruction in the Temple of the Jews, and afterward, in the school of one Tyrannus, he instructed those who came about him. There was decided opposition of various kinds, which opposition God overruled—as in the case, for example, of one Sceva—the Lord vindicating the name of Christ in a great and wonderful manner. We are told that all in Asia heard the Word. There seems to have been a diminution in the devotion rendered to the goddess Diana to such an extent, that Demetrius was moved, by a consideration of his own interests, to enlist, in opposition to Paul, the artisans and mechanics. I do not know in all literature of any more graphic description of a popular tumult, of the play of popular feeling, than the one in the account of the riot—for such it was—that was raised against Paul in the city of Ephesus. In the narrative there is a very curious corroboration of its own authenticity. You remember how the town clerk, in a speech to the people, said to the rioters: Why, everybody knows, it is proverbial that the city of Ephesus is a worshipper of Diana. The word used in this place is "*νεωχόρον*," or "temple-keeper," which is the exact signification of the word. The city was a "*νεωχόρον*" of Diana, and a curious corroboration of the

statement is, that upon Ephesian coins, this very word "*νεωχόρον*" is found as being descriptive of Ephesus.

To the elders an opportunity was given, apparently, to labor, thoroughly to organize the church at Ephesus; and in connection with this counsel to the elders at Ephesus, let me, to-day, call your attention to the elders of the church, and that organization, as it is shadowed forth to us in these historical notices.

THE CHURCH.

First of all, we have to say something about the church itself as a whole, and then about the organization and the officers that the Lord appoints for His church.

The word church in the Bible is used in various senses. There is the wide sense, in which the word church is employed to describe the whole body of the Lord's people. In this epistle to the Ephesians you have the word used in that sense more than once—"The church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all;" all that believed in the Saviour, and all that will believe in Him in all time. And earthly things will not come to an end, until the last man's soul that goes to make up that mystical, spiritual body, shall have been brought to a faith in Jesus Christ and eternal life. That is the widest sense in which we use the word church in the Bible. Then there is a narrower sense, in which it is used to describe a part of this great body. How frequently have Europeans, when they have been sailing into New York harbor, said to one another, "There is America," when the meaning was not that the whole of this continent lay before them, but that there was a part of the great continent upon which they were touching.

The church may mean the whole body of believers, from beginning to end, or it may mean a limited selection of the saved. "And called the elders of the church," that is, of the church he himself had founded at Ephesus, in that limited sense, as we see by the word "*ἐκκλησία*." It is a little like the Greek word for "elect," the word *ἐκλεκτός*, "*ἐκκλησία*," being from *ἐκκαλέα*, "to call out," and *ἐκλεκτός*, from *ἐκλέγω*, "one chosen;" but you can see that there is a difference between the two. There is a kind of call to all the men that pass by, and all the men that live in the neighborhood, and they who accept the call, and come in, are termed *ἐκκλησία*. How eagerly one wishes he could call all into these great churches, especially as one sees, on the Lord's day, hundreds of men and women walk by and refuse to come in.

Ἐκκλησία, then, means those who are called. In the narrower sense, it means those who accept the local and peculiar call, and identify themselves with a particular congregation. This church we describe under two forms—the visible church, and the invisible; the adjectives themselves describing exactly

the idea that we associate with the words. By the visible church, we mean all those who profess and call themselves Christians; and by the invisible, all those who have truly and with the whole heart believed in the Lord Jesus. This distinction is well founded. There are men who accept the external call, and there are those who accept the inner call, which is given to the heart, mind, and conscience, and are believers. There are men who accept the external call, but who will not receive the word into their hearts. There are members of the church invisible, and of the church visible. It is part of the policy of the Church of Rome to deny that there is any such distinction as this; it is the part of Protestantism to maintain that there is. The Church of Rome claims, by an inexorable logic, that any one who partakes of her sacraments becomes a member of the invisible church. This is denied on the part of Protestants, who take such revelations as the Lord makes concerning His church. The Bible describes the church as a barn-floor, with chaff and wheat mixed together, in due time to be separated, and the chaff to be burned up. She is likened to a net, in the hands of the fisherman, with good fish and bad in it, the worthless to be cast away and the good to be kept. She is likened to the field of the husbandmen, with wheat and also with tares, in due time the tares to be gathered into bundles and burned. The apostle declares her to be like a great house, with "vessels to honor, and vessels to dishonor." We cannot reconcile these statements with any declaration, that asserts that the visible church is the same as the invisible. This distinction it is important that we should keep in mind. You need not be told that the fact that you are Presbyterians does not prove that you are members of the invisible church. That is a matter before God, and between Him and your conscience, and you only know when you are joined to the Saviour by a living faith, and dwelt in by the Holy Spirit.

There is the church militant, so called from the Latin word for soldier; and the church triumphant, those who have gone home, and are wearing their crowns before the Lord. We must not forget that we are here in the church militant. If there be difficulties and hardships to be endured, if there be sacrifices to be made, let us bear in mind that that springs out of our position as members of the church militant, and we have no more reason to be surprised by such things, than the soldier when called to the field, and exposed to danger. Blessed be God's name that He aids us in His militant church, and gives us full pardon, that we may fight the good fight.

As regards the church militant, it is nowhere alleged that she is infallible. Protestantism denies such infallibility of the church, and denies it upon the authority of the divine word. Romanism, by the same inexorable logic, is compelled to assert this

infallibility. God has given us this infallible guidance in the Bible, but the Church of Rome has put that Book out of the hands of her people, and now she is compelled to meet the demand of man, and make everything of her traditions and interceedings and forms, thereby glorifying herself as a great corporation. Infallibility is predicated of the Bible. Its holy oracles cannot lie, but the church, in any particular age, may err and make mistakes, and history is full of the record of just such mistakes.

It is asserted in the Bible, that the church is indestructible, not meaning the Church of Corinth, or the Church of Rome, or the Church of Laodicea, but meaning the church in the widest sense. The mystical body of Christ cannot perish from the earth. There is a statement made by the Lord, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock (*πετρα*) I have built my church." It does not say, upon this "*πετρος*." Rome makes the "*πετρος*" and the "*πετρα*" the same thing, and makes the "*πετρος*" the foundation of the church. Where must the church have been when Peter fell? Should we ask Peter himself, if he believed himself to be the foundation, you hear him contradict this as he speaks to the Jews. So when he writes his first epistle, in the first chapter and fourth verse: "To whom coming *as unto* a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ." By Peter's own inspired statements, every sort of ground is taken away from the people to believe that he sets himself up to be the poor miserable foundation upon which the church is built. Christ is that foundation, in His true Messiahship.

It is no where asserted in the Bible that the church shall always have a visible and imposing appearance to men. The Church of Rome is driven by her inexorable logic to assert perpetual visibility. They will say, "Where was your church before the Reformation? The Church of Christ is always visible, therefore, your church cannot be true." Where is the assurance that the church shall always be visible? That she shall always exist, is one thing; that she shall always be *conspicuous*, is another. Christ is the sun and the church is the moon, and like the moon, she has her periods of obscurity and her periods of shining. She had her periods of obscurity when even the keen eye of the prophet could not see her; but Christ has His invisible church. The Lord had His real church, though not visible. Permanent visibility is no where claimed for her; but her imperishable nature is guaranteed by her living union with the Lord Jesus. He is the head of the body of the church; "the fullness of Him that filleth all in all." The head directs the body, and Jesus Christ directs and

regulates the movements of His mystical body. He is the head of authority. He is the head of control. He is the head of supply. All fullness is made to dwell in Him for the benefit of those who are brought into the mystical union with Him as the members of His body. I do not need to tell you how this statement has been travestied upon. A body with two heads is held to be a monster. Any making a human being in the nominal succession of the Apostle Peter, the head of the Church of Christ, is not founded on the Bible. If it be said that Jesus is absent, and this is His viceregent, that does not accord with the promise that He shall never be absent from His church—"Lo! I am with you always." That which is weak might need a deputy—a viceregent—but he who is strong needs no deputy. It is the tendency of the Church of Rome to displace the true church of Jesus Christ, and exalt in its room, covered with claims to its dignity and honor, a corrupt, degraded, and degrading human corporation.

Jesus Christ is to be looked to for guidance and direction in the management of the affairs of the church. Churches, as parts of the great church, are more or less true, in the degree in which they teach true doctrine, in which they maintain pure worship, and in which holiness marks the character of the people. True doctrine, scripturalness of worship, holiness of life, the measure in which these three things are found in any community, in that measure does it approach to the body of Christ. Churches are more or less pure as they are marked by these features. If a traveler passed over this country, and should have occasion to describe what he had seen to his friend in Europe, he would say that, "There are certain of the older cities that are very American." He might say that "There are other places that are much less American—some German, some Bohemian, some Irish, some French," etc. They are all part and parcel of the great American community, but they all differ in their characteristics. And it is so with the great church of the Lord Jesus. The more there is declaration of Bible truth, the more there is scripturalness of worship; the more there is holiness in the members, the more true is the church, the more does she conform herself to the ideal—to the mystical body, of which Christ is the head. And the aim of every church ought to be to reach this purity in the teaching of the doctrine, in the maintenance of worship, and in the personal consecration of the individual members. So much it seems proper to say upon the general subject of the church of the Lord Jesus in the world.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH.

For several reasons I desire to say something upon the organization of the church. We have that organization dis-

tinctly pointed out in the two texts that have been read. For the space of two years the Apostle Paul had labored at Ephesus, and an adequate organization had been given to the church, under which she could perpetuate herself. Paul meant that the church should have a true, organic health; that she should have power to continue her work and her influence for good. We learn from the words in the address which he makes, that there were elders in this church; that there was a plurality of elders. The evidence from church history is conclusive as to the smallness of the congregations at that time. Indeed, one average congregation in this city would be nearly as large as the whole number then, and yet, later, when Paul comes to speak to this plurality of elders, he says: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you *overseers* [*ἐπίσκοποι*—bishops], to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with His own blood." The *ἐπίσκοποι*—elders—are bishops. That used to be regarded as a Presbyterian heresy, and it is a very gratifying thing to know that such is no longer the case, and in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, in the note by Dr. Plumptre, you will find an explanation of these words, and you will see with what fairness and candor the subject is treated. The Greek word for elder, or presbyter, "*πρεσβυτερος*," means one and the same person, without any distinction whatever between them. Now, the ground that we have uniformly taken—historically taken—is that the apostolic church government involved, at its very beginning, the substantial identity of the bishop and the elder, and that a plurality of such bishops and elders is to be in each church, and upon this body rests the responsibility of shepherding all the flock—"Over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." Our object ought to be to have apostolic doctrine, and our object ought to be to approximate to apostolic organization, apostolic government, apostolic usage. It is very well to notice that directions are given for the maintenance of these elders of the church. Then this is a natural arrangement; it comes down from patriarchal times. An elder meant one who had character and gravity and experience of years. It was so over all oriental countries. The Hebrew people naturally continued that arrangement. God's way is to take natural arrangements and give them spiritual direction. In the Jewish nation, as early as the days of Moses, the elders were a recognized, governing, counciling body. When synagogues were erected over the land, each synagogue had its elders; so, when the followers of Christ were driven out of their synagogue, they set up a Christian synagogue, and they carried into the Christian synagogue the same arrangement, only bringing into it the inspiration of the Christian life.

When Titus was sent to churches where there were Gentiles, and where his duties were substantially those of organization, instructions were given him for the ordaining of elders; in only such cases was there any need to give instructions, among the Jews the custom being understood. This ancient custom is taken and applied to the Christian Church, and constituted an organization, under which great congregations have shown a healthy Christian life.

When from the people themselves rulers or governors are chosen, they are chosen on the ground of intelligence, of experience, of gravity, and of gravity connected only with years, and on the ground of being well tried; accordingly, the apostle gives directions as to who should be such bishops. They should be pure in their domestic relations, men of one wife each. They should be vigilant and sober. They should be competent to give instructions—"apt to teach." They should "have a good report among them that are without." They should be men of self-denial—"not given to much wine." They should be men given to ruling their own house, so that the Church of Christ may be built up and established. These officers—bishops and deacons—we hold to be the only officers recognized in the church. Paul, when he sent his epistle to the Philippians, addressed it "To the church at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." If the Pope of Rome should address a letter to his church in America, directed "To the church in America, with the bishops and deacons," the Romanists would say, "What? No notice of the cardinals! What! no notice of the deans, the archdeans, and the rest! No notice of the whole body of priests; no notice of the whole body of preachers." The thing is absurd upon the face of it. Yet, when the Apostle Paul wrote to the whole church, with the bishops and deacons, he included everybody in the church, the bishops and deacons covering all the officers that he recognized in the church. I stand here as a minister upon the same level precisely with my brother elders in the management of this church. The difference between them and me is, that where the gift of teaching is recognized in the church, the elder that has that gift is recognized as laboring in the word and doctrine, and so discriminated from his brother elder, whose distinction is simply to rule with other elders. There were times when it was proper to give maintenance to all the bishops in the Christian church. When men collect together, and make their appeals to the public, it is customary to choose their president and to associate with him a body of directors or trustees, or whatever you may please to call it. There is an analogy therein to a healthy Apostolic Christian church, and the elders associated in the government of the church with the minister may be supposed to bring with them a

knowledge of human nature, a knowledge of individual life, of practical experience and Christian character, and as having sympathy with the people to whom they belong, and from whose ranks they are chosen; and to be, at the same time, in sympathy with the minister, whose purpose really is one with themselves.

Such, brethren, is the basis upon which we rest the organization of this great church, and I do feel that there is cause for thankfulness to God Almighty on the part of you, its members, for the Christian elders given to you in times past. I am able to speak of what they have been before my time from frequent perusal of the letters of my predecessors, and for substantial aid and encouragement, I shall be bound to make corresponding acknowledgement regarding the elders with whom I have had the privilege of co-operating. I came into this city an utter and entire stranger, with little knowledge of American life. That more mistakes have not been made by me is to be accounted for only by the circumstance, that I have had the frank and confidential counsel, encouragement, and sympathy of the elders chosen among you to rule over you in the Lord. I cannot speak too highly of their intelligent Christian worth, their earnest personal piety, their deep interest in your spiritual welfare. You ought to appreciate and honor them that have thus been set over you in the Lord.

May God grant that, by pure doctrine and spiritual worship, and apostolic usage and government, we may be all of us, minister and ruling elders and people, rendered holy in life, bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit in abundance to the glory of the Divine Name.

The Prevalence of Sin.**A SERMON**

By **Archibald Campbell Tait, D. D.,** LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.—ROM. viii : 22, 23.

I DO not propose here to enter on the difficulties of this difficult passage. The very word, creation, or creature, as it is translated in verses 19, 20, is capable of very different senses, according as it is understood in a limited or more extended application.

Ver. 20. "The creature was made subject to vanity." Some understand the inanimate creation involved in the secondary consequences of man's fall, or the inanimate creation with the lower animals.* Some, again, turning to the higher orders of creation, understand the word to mean mankind, the unconverted races groaning in their ignorance and misery while they wait for some great manifestation of the sons of God ; or men who, living in a land and age of light, still know not Christ, and are therefore unprotected, uncomforted, and exposed to those many miseries, from which they can only escape when the throes of the spiritual birth bring them to the new life enjoyed by Christ's real people.

For our present purpose we need not be minute in settling either the exact meaning of each of the words, or their exact connection amid the difficulties of the context. I shall regard the text at present as bringing before us these two facts.

The first, set forth in verse 22, That a real Christian looking without himself sees in all around him traces of misery, the fruit of sin.

The second, set forth in verse 23, That looking within he is still troubled ; though he knows God has done much for him, he feels how much there is still to do in the work of cleansing and renewal.

Ver. 22. "We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

Ver. 23. "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (*i. e.*, as I understand, its final complete emancipation from the thralldom of sin).

No doubt we are right to be on our guard against a mere sentimental religion—against making too much of feeling, as

* *Vide* Alford in loco

contrasted with sound principle resulting in sound practice. The Church has suffered as much perhaps from the self-deceit of assumed or overstrained feeling, as from the dulness of a self-satisfied orthodoxy, or the coldness of a mere formal practice not impelled and regulated by the living springs of religion in the heart. But, however this may be, there is no true religion without feeling; and a real Christian, whether he looks without or within, must have his feelings deeply stirred when he thinks how much sin prevails around him—how much misery is connected with it—how little he is himself able to cope with it from his own abiding sinfulness.

The reading of the Psalms supplies a fair test to us by which, in this respect, to measure our spiritual progress. Open the book at random. Turn, for example, to Ps. lv. 9: "I have seen violence and strife in the city. Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof: mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it. Wickedness is in the midst thereof; deceit and guile depart not from her streets." When the Psalmist was afflicted with this thought, he cried out, in verses 4, 6, "My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. And I said, Oh, that I had wings like a dove! for then would I flee away, and be at rest." It is not merely because the prevalence of wickedness stirs up enemies against himself, but rather because he is pained that there are so many sinners near him, the enemies of God. The sight of the wickedness that is in the city, that festers and grows rank wherever men do congregate, is a sad sight for him who loves God in Christ Jesus. This is characteristic of the whole Book of Psalms. A feeling of annoyance and pain because sinners are so many and so unrestrained. But, then, David did not confine his dislike of sin to the sins of other people, or of the world in general. He was pained at sins which were his own. Take the well-known words in Ps. li. 9: "Hide thy face from my sins (my own sins), and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God! and renew a right spirit within me."

The whole book is full of sad thoughts because sin is still so powerful—even in good men's hearts. No one can read the Psalms as they ought to be read (and they are almost forced upon us in our Church's service)—no one can look upon them, as the outpourings of a religious heart, as approved by God Himself, and by the experience of all the faithful souls that have delighted to use them, among Jews and Christians alike—no one can so read them aright, without having his feelings stirred as to these two matters—

I. The prevalence of sin without him.

II. The prevalence of sin within him.

Now, much of the Epistle to the Romans—this eighth chapter, for example—supplies the same sort of test as we find in the Psalms by which to gauge our religious feelings. Would to God we were more like David or St. Paul, and not so cold in heart, so easily satisfied with a formal outward standard! But we said, it is not feeling alone that constitutes religion, and now-a-days, especially, religion must be tested by its works. The tendency is to think little of forms of faith. “His can’t be wrong whose life is in the right.”

Let me say, then, the best security for a consistent Christian life of usefulness is to be found in a heart really imbued with the feelings of which we are speaking. If a man is pained at the sight of sin without him, knowing in himself how great an evil sin is, and longing to be free from it, then it becomes impossible for him to remain contentedly inactive while sin is gaining ground. The feelings, indeed, which he expresses in the language of David and of St. Paul must be real; but if they are real, from feelings, they become principles, and principles showing themselves in act.

How different are the feelings with which different persons walk through the streets of London! I have heard it remarked that, in passing along the great thoroughfares, it is strange to note, when your attention is directed to it, how many people you pass who are talking to themselves. But if not talking, they are all thinking. The anxious faces of most of them show this. In plays and poems men are made to express their thoughts aloud. If we could hear their soliloquies, it would be well worth while to learn what all this teeming crowd is thinking of. These soliloquies would let us into many secrets as to their habitual thoughts, desires, and characters—the aims to which the busy day has been directed—the sort of pleasures which are most prized as the hour for relaxation approaches. Sometimes, perhaps, a cunning plan to overreach, hidden while a part was acted in the presence of the intended dupe, may be spoken freely in half-whispers, while the actor finds himself no longer under restraint and is in the solitude of a crowd. Sometimes the man is giving vent to what he had not readiness to say when it was wanted, but he has been conning the matter over since—some matter which is very important to him—and this is what he wishes he had said. If we could hear, we should learn the fixed impression made on him by what has passed. With some, these whisperings may be but snatches of songs, speaking merely of the mind’s vacancy. With some, let us trust, they are ejaculatory prayers—“O, my God, what an ocean is this in which I am immersed! in this great Babylon what a flood of suffering and sinful humanity is sweeping past me! can I do anything to rescue here and there some drowning

swimmer from the billows?" Or—"O God, *that* old sin, how it haunts me! Surely the blood of Christ is powerful enough to wash away its stain. Surely the grace of God, my Saviour, will give me power to conquer when it again assails me."

Now, it is the men who have these thoughts of the misery of other people's sins and of their own, who will, I think, be found the true philanthropists, ready to gain a vent for the feelings of their own troubled hearts in doing something for the troubles of the mass around them. Our deep sense of the misery of sin leads us to do good to others. Certainly it is remarkable that public schemes of philanthropy did not flourish in Europe of old, even in the most polished nations, before Christ came. There was much done, no doubt, in heathen Rome by rich men to conciliate the good will of the needy by bread and the games. But well-devised plans, undertaken simply to alleviate sufferings and lessen temptations, do we not, in Europe at least, owe all of these to the Lord Jesus Christ? And so, even now—after so many good suggestions and good institutions have been borrowed from Christianity by a world that has no love for Christ—I do not indeed doubt that you will find some great philanthropist, here and there, who is not (so far as we can see) stirred by any religious feeling, and we honor what he does for the good that flows from it, and we love the man; but still, speaking generally, if you would have any great and widespread movement of benevolence, it is on the deep feelings of Christian hearts you must rely, or your efforts will all languish. Of course, this holds as to missionary efforts to raise the heathen to Christian civilization. In these you hardly expect much help from any who have not Christian feelings in their hearts. The same holds of home missionary movements; not that all who join in them are influenced by strong Christian feelings, but that there is an affinity between these efforts and such a feeling. These efforts may become fashionable for a time, and do obviously approve themselves to all ordinarily good men, and thus make some progress; but you cannot rely on their steady maintenance, nor on their long-continued progress, in spite of obstacles, unless you enlist the sympathy of Christian hearts. Look even to secular education. I think we may take it for granted, it has certainly been affirmed continually by those best able to judge as having most experience, that you must depend on the religious feelings of the community, if you are to have any general system of education supported by voluntary effort. Those who do not advocate education on religious principles have not shown that they are ready to make great sacrifices for it. I am by no means saying that the number of religious and self-denying people in the country is sufficient to make adequate voluntary efforts to bring education home to the millions of our poor, but

I adduce the past history of the education question simply as an illustration of this statement, that, imperfect as may be the Christian feelings we have to appeal to, and slight the progress which each individual Christian has made in having these feelings deepened into principles by the Holy Spirit of God, yet it is to this good root that you must look for the aftergrowth of an abiding Christian benevolence.

We come back then to that from which we started, that the sense of human sin and misery which lies at the root of all earnest Christianity, and the longing to see the end of it, which St. Paul in this passage of the Romans sets before us as characteristic of the Christian—this, gradually deepening, strengthening, and extending, gives the best hope for efforts after relief from sin. Such feelings as to the misery of sin, if they are real, are the only sure source from which we can expect with certainty that efforts of earnest Christian benevolence will spring. And to them we must look, if we would have men thus exerting themselves for Christ's sake—not by fits and starts, irregularly, but everywhere and under all circumstances. These feelings go with those who have them wherever they move, and are with them at all times.

Therefore, when a good Christian visits London, he will not leave these feelings behind him in his country home. He will show the reality of his convictions as to sin by doing what he can to help in some work of Christian benevolence where he is living, though it be but for a few weeks.

We live, my friends, in an age when we cannot but hear much said respecting two dissimilar systems of Christianity which divide the whole religious communities of Europe, and find both of them a home, and sometimes, alas, a battle-field, within our own National Church: one resting much on authority and the outward helps of sacramental and ceremonial usage; the other appealing to the individual reason and the conscience, and rejoicing ever to speak of the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. We hear also much, while earnestly religious men are thus contending, of the steady, onward progress of a materialistic system of unbelief which threatens to trample down both the one form of Christianity and the other, while there stands also, hard by, a sneering or despairing or frivolous skepticism, which refuses to join any side in such discussions, contented to wait for another world before it makes up its mind as to mysteries; patiently confessing, that respecting what concerns things unseen, while here in the flesh, as it knows nothing, it believes nothing. Now, at such a time, it seems to be the especial office of the minister of Christ to urge on men's consciences those great, simple truths of the Gospel about which there is no dispute. My friend, you are a sinner, as I am. Judged by

your own standard, be it what it may, you fail, and fail grievously, and as you fail, so do those around you. The world, and you living in the world, are in a bad plight ; you fail in doing what you know you ought to do ; your failure we, with David and St. Paul, and all the good men who have lived from their day till now, call sin, and sin and suffering somehow are linked together. The Lord Jesus Christ has come to save you from both. Cease your contentions as to forms of religion. Cease from the arrogance of your dry, logical speculations ; give up frivolity or cynicism. Go down to the depths of your being in your hearts and consciences. Is there no voice divine speaking within ? If there be, though it speak but in a whisper, be sure you listen to it. Think of the reality of things now as men think of them on their death-beds, and then I feel sure you will agree with David and St. Paul ; you will feel and know you are a sinner, and this will stir you to help others who are sinners, who are sinners like yourself, but who are not sinners without hope, because Christ was born, was tempted, died, and rose, and lives now interceding that he may save them and you.

Character Building.

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT OF A SERMON BY John A. Broadus, D.D., LL.D.,
IN THE MADISON AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH, NEW YORK.

Text : 2 Peter i : 3, 8 ; more especially commencing at 5th verse.

I SUPPOSE we will all agree that the important work we have to do in this life, as regards ourselves, is the building of our characters. The business man knows how important it is for him to understand the character of his subordinates. A large part of the capital in trade of some men is this power to look into the hearts of others. How important is this gift to the politician. Have you never got a letter from a stranger proposing some great thing, and wished to look that man in the face for five minutes that you might be able to know him? How you looked the letter over and over again, in hopes that it might reveal something about the character of the sender. Have you never observed a skilled physician at the bedside of a very sick patient, endeavoring to draw the sick man into a conversation, talking on things unimportant, until you have wondered what it all meant? That physician, so quiet, seemingly indifferent in his talk, knew what he was about. He wished to understand the character of his patient. You, parents, all know how necessary it is that you find out the nature of your children. And pastors know how essential it is for them to look into the hearts of their parishioners.

But important as it is to know the character of others, it is still more important that you understand your own. What a man *is* is more essential than his possessions or standing in the world. We have almost a morbid desire to know about our fellow-men. The press seeks to gratify this curiosity by its publication of what others are doing. We should look to ourselves—at the revelations our actions make of our own natures. Then, character is the only thing which we shall carry away from this fast, fleeting life. Our body, touched by death, shall soon drop from us, then what we are will remain, will pass on.

The apostle, in the passage, is speaking of the building of character. He treats :

1. Of some reasons for this work.
2. Of lessons as to the way it is to be done.
3. The motives for doing the work.

First.—THE REASONS OR ENCOURAGEMENTS.

1. The Apostle says that God's divine power has given us all things which are necessary for the development of life and piety. He does not say that we will, unaided, be able to build up ourselves. We all know, who have tried it, how hard this work is. All things we need God gives us. Can we think of

anything God has failed to give—*donate*—to us when we were earnestly desiring to perfect ourselves?

2. Then the Apostle adds, as another reason, that God has given us exceeding great promises for the future. "As the day is, so shall thy strength be." This cheers us in our greatest trouble. We do not know, when in the severest trial, but what God is just then, in this, fulfilling some promise? A wise father does not give to his son at once a large capital. It might be ruinous to him. He gives him capital and responsibility and power as he is able to bear it. "Exceeding great and precious promises." How these words give us courage in our battle of life! Have you not walked out with a child in the darkness, where, if alone, it would be terror-stricken? It tightly grasps your hand. It wishes to assure itself that it has a hold of your hand. Thus assured, it is not afraid. Why? It has confidence. So we walk in dark places with God. We have a confidence that relieves us from fear. We need to be assured that God is with us. His promises, great, exceeding, and precious, give us this assurance.

3. Then we have an inspiring ideal. He has given us a nature that partakes of the Divine nature. It is true, we are animal. How the animal in us does assert itself! It is no wonder that many scientific men come to the conclusion that man is nothing but animal; that there is only a difference of degree. When you stop and think, shake yourselves, and listen to the voices in you, you will know there is a difference. Beasts reason a little, but exhibit no sign of a moral nature. They have no conscience. They know nothing whatever of right and wrong—of the word *ought*—a word a little child may utter, but which can shape the universe. Now, with this moral nature, which brings into kinship with the Divine nature, we have an inspiring reason for building up a right nature in us.

Second.—NEXT, THE APOSTLE SHOWS HOW WE ARE TO PROCEED IN THE WORK.

1. To your faith add virtue. He starts with faith, the foundation of all. He assumes that you believe. Without believing, you would not be a Christian. But you are not to stop with believing. He who stops there is no Christian. He must exercise his faith. And in the exercise of it virtue will be furnished. That is the meaning of the passage, "To your faith" supply "virtue;" that is, try to be good. The mother says to the child, "Try to be good." The learned philosopher, the poet with his mighty word-power, angels, God Himself, cannot say anything better than "try to be good."

2. To virtue supply knowledge. It is not enough that you simply desire to do what is right. You are to *know* what is

right. You must get light. How often we say, had we known what we do now, we would not have done this or that. Even those who try the hardest to be good stumble in the darkness. Then there are very many who don't more than half try. How these do go astray! Very important is it that the Apostle has said, supply knowledge to thy faith. In the whirl of our daily life, when everything is so confusing, we need light as well as a desire to be good.

3. To your knowledge supply a good degree of self-control. That is the meaning of temperance. Passion and prejudice blind knowledge. We must control ourselves, or the light will be put out. Men often cheat themselves much more than they do others. You say we are speaking about simple things, as if to children. True, these things are simple, but they are the very essence of right living. The greatest things, the things that lie right near the foundations of life, are simple. Do some of you think that to gain self-control is easy? If you think so, you have never made a real effort at it. Do some of you think it hard? Remember, God works with and in him who tries to be right and to do right.

4. Then, in your exercise of self-control, have a good supply of patience. You have seen how sometimes those who have succeeded in gaining control of themselves are impatient with others who lack in this respect. Persons may obtain this mastery of themselves by heroic effort; or, it may be, they lack temptation. One has no patience with a drunkard—and it is hard enough to have patience with such an one. The impatient man is cold and narrow, and could hardly be a drunkard if he tried. Did you never hear a drunkard, ashamed of himself, say "Well, I ain't stingy and mean, as that fellow." Says the Apostle, let your self-control supply patience. In this mad, rushing age of ours how needful is this injunction! There are some who think patience to be a weak thing. It is no sign of strength that through lack of self-control we give vent to temper and passion. A horse that runs away does not prove that it is strong, but that the driver is weak.

5. Then, lest that we should think that this life is all, the Apostle continues, To patience supply piety. Piety controls all the other graces. Then, says he, see that in this piety is brotherly kindness; and in this brotherly kindness is Charity—Love. Where there is so much to bear, so much roughness, so much that is selfish and hard, that worries and irritates, as in this world, how essential that the Christian should have patience and brotherly kindness and love.

Third.—OBSERVE SOME ADDITIONAL MOTIVES TO THIS WORK.

1. Through these things we will make progress in the life of a Christian, "For if these things be in you and abound, they

make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful," etc. If you are teaching a clerk his duties, you tell him to do this and that, and then he will understand how to do these other things. So with children; so with scholars at school. We learn duty through the discharge of duty. Christianity is a practical thing. If these truths be in you and abound, then will you know more of Christ and of His sustaining sympathy, and of the whole round of Christian truths. All this will be wrought through the atonement and intercession of Christ. So there will be no place for boasting. He who has developed the most, done the most, will be the most humble.

2. Another reason is given in ver. 10: You will make "your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, you will never fall." I remember when a boy how those words, "calling and election," often sent a shiver through my soul. How many stumble over them. What does the Apostle say?—If you do these things, if you will supply to you faith, virtue, etc., you will never fall, and so you will make your calling and election sure. There is a divine side to this doctrine of election; but with that we have nothing to do. If a man wishes to know whether he is a Christian, one of the elect, let him try to do these things. How we are constantly brought back to the practical!

3. But a crowning motive is given in ver. 11: "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ." The word ministered may be rendered *supplied*. Is not this motive enough that we give all diligence to perfect our characters?

Brethren, I have tried to preach you a practical sermon, one that would help me in my troubles, and I pray God it may help you.

Christ the Destroyer of Death.**A SERMON**

By C. H. Spurgeon, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, LONDON, ON
LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 17, 1876.

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.—1 Cor. xv. 26.

DURING four previous Sabbaths we have been following our Lord and Master through his great achievements; we have seen Him as the end of the law, as the conqueror of Satan, as the overcomer of the world, as the creator of all things new, and now we behold Him as the destroyer of death. In this, and in all His other glorious deeds, let us worship Him with all our hearts.

May the Spirit of God lead us into the full meaning of this, which is one of the Redeemer's grandest characters.

How wonderfully is our Lord Jesus *one with man*! For when the Psalmist David had considered "the heavens the work of God's fingers," he said, "Lord, what is man that Thou art mindful of him; or the Son of Man that thou visitest Him?" He was speaking of Christ. You would have thought he was thinking of man in his humblest estate, and that he was wondering that God should be pleased to honor so frail a being as the poor, fallen son of Adam. You would never have dreamed that the glorious gospel lay hid within those words of grateful adoration. Yet, in the course of that meditation, David went on to say, "Thou madest him to have dominion over all the works of Thy hands, Thou hast put all things under his feet." Now, had it not been for the interpretation of the Holy Spirit, we should still have considered that he was speaking of men in general, and of man's natural dominion over the brute creation; but, behold, while that is true, there is another and a far more important truth concealed within it, for David, as a prophet, was all the while chiefly speaking of the Man of men. It was of Jesus, the Son of man, as honored of the Father, the model man, the second Adam, the head of the new race of men, that the Psalmist sang, "He hath put all things under His feet." Strange, was it not, that when he spake of man, he must of necessity speak also of our Lord? And yet, when we consider the thing, it is but natural and according to truth, and only remarkable to us because in our minds we too often consider Jesus and man as far-removed, and too little regard Him as truly one with man.

Now, see how the Apostle infers from the Psalm the necessity of the resurrection, for if all things must be put under the feet

of the man, Christ Jesus, then every form of evil must be conquered by Him, and death among the rest. "He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet." It must be so; and, therefore, death itself must ultimately be overcome. Thus out of that simple sentence in the Psalm, which we should have read far otherwise without the light of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle gathereth the doctrine of the resurrection. The Holy Spirit taught his servant, Paul, how by a subtle chemistry he could distil from simple words a precious, fragrant essence, which the common reader never suspected to be there. Texts have their secret drawers, their box within a box, their hidden souls, which lie asleep till He who placed them on their secret couches awakens them, that they may speak to the hearts of His chosen. Could you ever have guessed resurrection from the eighth Psalm? No; nor could you have believed, had it not been told you, that there is fire in the flint, oil in the rock, and bread in the earth we tread upon. Man's books have usually far less in them than we expect; but the Book of the Lord is full of surprises—it is a mass of light, a mountain of priceless revelations. We little know what yet lies hidden within the Scriptures. We know the form of sound words as the Lord has taught it to us, and by it we will abide, but there are inner store-houses into which we have not peered; chambers of revelation lit up with bright lamps, perhaps too bright for our eyes at this present. If Paul, when the Spirit of God rested upon him, could see so much in the songs of David, the day may come when we shall see still more in the epistles of Paul, and wonder at ourselves, that we did not understand better the things which the Holy Ghost has so freely spoken to us by the Apostle. May we at this time be enabled to look deep and far, and behold the sublime glories of our risen Lord.

To the text itself, then: *Death is an enemy; death is an enemy to be destroyed; death is an enemy that shall be destroyed last; "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."*

I.—DEATH AN ENEMY. *It was so born*, even as Haman, the Agagite, was the enemy of Israel by his descent. Death is the child of our direst foe, for "sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin." Now, that which is distinctly the fruit of transgression, cannot be other than an enemy of man. Death was introduced into the world on that gloomy day which saw our fall, and he that had the power of it is our arch enemy and betrayer, the devil; from both of which facts we must regard it as the manifest enemy of man. Death is an alien in this world; it did not enter into the original design of the unfallen creation; but its intrusion mars and spoils the whole. It is no part of the

Great Shepherd's flock, but it is a wolf which cometh to kill and to destroy. Geology tells us that there was death among the various forms of life from the first ages of the globe's history, even when as yet the world was not fitted up as the dwelling of man. This I can believe, and still regard death as the result of sin. If it can be proved that there is such an organic unity between man and the lower animals, that they would not have died if Adam had not sinned, then I see in those deaths before Adam the antecedent consequences of a sin which was then uncommitted. If by the merits of Jesus there was salvation before He had offered His atoning sacrifice, I do not find it hard to conceive that the forseen demerits of sin may have cast the shadow of death over the long ages which came before man's transgression. Of that we know little, nor is it important that we should; but certain is it, that as far as this present creation is concerned, death is not God's invited guest, but an intruder, whose presence mars the feast. Man, in his folly, welcomed Satan and sin when they forced their way into the high festival of Paradise, but he never welcomed death; even his blind eyes could see in that skeleton form a cruel foe. As the lion to the herds of the plain, as the scythe to the flowers of the field, as the wind to the sere leaves of the forest, such is death to the sons of men. They fear it by an inward instinct, because their conscience tells them that it is the child of their sin.

Death is well called an enemy, for *it does an enemy's work* toward us. For what purpose doth an enemy come, but to root up, and to pull down, and to destroy? Death tears in pieces that comely handiwork of God, the fabric of the human body, so marvelously wrought by the fingers of divine skill. Casting this rich embroidery into the grave among the armies of the worm, to its fierce soldiery death divideth "to every one a prey of divers colors, of divers colors of needlework;" and they ruthlessly rend in pieces the spoil. This building of our manhood is a house fair to look upon, but death, the destroyer, darkens its windows, shakes its pillars, closes its doors, and causes the sound of the grinding to cease. Then the daughters of music are brought low, and the strong men bow themselves. This vandal spares no work of life, however full of wisdom or beauty, for it looseth the silver cord and breaketh the golden bowl. Lo! at the fountain the costly pitcher is utterly broken, and at the cistern the well-wrought wheel is dashed in pieces! Death is a fierce invader of the realms of life, and where it comes it fells every good tree, stops all wells of water, and mars every good piece of land with stones. See you a man when death has wrought his will upon him, what a ruin he is! How is his beauty turned to ashes,

and his comeliness to corruption. Surely an enemy hath done this.

Look, my brethren, at the course of death throughout all ages and in all lands. What field is there without its grave? What city without its cemetery? Whither can we go to find no sepulchres? As the sandy shore is covered with the up-castings of the worm, so art thou, O earth! covered with those grass-grown hillocks, beneath which sleep the departed generations of men. And thou, O sea, even thou art not without thy dead! As if the earth were too full of corpses, and they jostled each other in their crowded sepulchres, even into thy caverns, O mighty main, the bodies of the dead are cast! Thy waves must become defiled with the carcasses of men, and on thy floor must lie the bones of the slain. Our enemy, death, has marched, as it were, with sword and fire, ravaging the human race. Neither Goth nor Hun nor Tartar could have slain so universally all that breathed, for death has suffered none to escape. Everywhere it has withered household joys and created sorrow and sighing; in all lands where the sun is seen it hath blinded men's eyes with weeping. The tear of the bereaved, the wail of the widow, and the moan of the orphan—these have been death's war music, and he has found therein a song of victory.

The greatest conquerors have only been death's slaughtermen, journeymen butchers working in his shambles. War is nothing better than death holding carnival, and devouring his prey a little more in haste than is his common wont.

Death has done the work of an enemy to those of us who have as yet escaped his arrows. Those who have lately stood around a new-made grave and buried half their hearts, can tell you what an enemy death is. It takes the friend from our side, and the child from our bosom; neither does it care for our crying. He has fallen who was the pillar of the household; she has been snatched away who was the brightness of the hearth. The little one is torn out of its mother's bosom, though it almost breaks her heartstrings; and the blooming youth is taken from his father's side, though the parent's fondest hopes are thereby crushed. Death has no pity for the young and no mercy for the old; he pays no regard to the good or to the beautiful. His scythe cuts down sweet flowers and noxious weeds with equal readiness. He cometh into our garden, trampleth down our lilies, and scattereth our roses on the ground; yea, and even the modest flowers planted in the corner, and hiding their beauty beneath the leaves that they may blush unseen, death spieth out even these, and cares nothing for their fragrance, but withers them with his burning breath. He is thine enemy, indeed, thou fatherless child, left for the

pitiless storm of a cruel world to beat upon, with none to shelter thee. He is thine enemy, O widow! for the light of thy life is gone, and the desire of thine eyes has been removed with a stroke. He is thine enemy, husband, for thy house is desolate, and thy little children cry for their mother, of whom death has robbed thee!

He is the enemy of us all, for what head of a family among us has not had to say to him, "Me thou hast bereaved again and again!" Especially is death an enemy to the living when he invades God's house and causes the prophet and the priest to be numbered with the dead. The church mourns when her most useful ministers are smitten down, when the watchful eye is closed in darkness, and the instructive tongue is mute. Yet how often does death thus war against us! The earnest, the active, the indefatigable, are taken away. Those mightiest in prayer, those most affectionate in heart, those most exemplary in life, those are cut down in the midst of their labors, leaving behind them a church which needs them more than tongue can tell. If the Lord does but threaten to permit death to seize a beloved pastor, the souls of his people are full of grief, and they view death as their worst foe, while they plead with the Lord and entreat Him to bid their minister live.

Even *those who die* may well count death to be their enemy; I mean not now that they have risen to their seats, and, as disembodied spirits, behold the King in his beauty, but aforetime while death was approaching them. He seemed to their trembling flesh to be a foe, for it is not in nature, except in moments of extreme pain or aberration of mind, or of excessive expectation of glory, for us to be in love with death. It was wise of our Creator so to constitute us that the soul loves the body and the body loves the soul, and they desire to dwell together as long as they may, else had there been no care for self-preservation, and suicide would have destroyed the race.

"For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin?"

It is a first law of our nature that skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life, and thus we are nerved to struggle for existence, and to avoid that which would destroy us. This useful instinct renders death an enemy, but it also aids in keeping us from that crime of all crimes the most sure of damnation, if a man commit it wilfully and in his sound mind—I mean the crime of self-murder.

When death cometh, even to the good man, he cometh as an enemy, for he is attended by such terrible heralds and grim outriders as do greatly scare us.

“Fever with brow of fire ;
Consumption wan ; palsy, half-warmed with life,
And half a clay-cold lump ; joint-torturing gout,
And ever-gnawing rheum ; convulsion wild ;
Swoln dropsy ; panting asthma ; apoplex
Full gorged.”

None of these add to the aspect of death a particle of beauty. He comes with pains and griefs ; he comes with sighs and tears. Clouds and darkness are round about him, an atmosphere laden with dust oppresses those whom he approaches, and a cold wind chills them even to the marrow. He rides on the pale horse, and where his steed sets its foot the land becomes a desert. By the footfall of that terrible steed, the worm is awakened to gnaw the slain. When we forget other grand truths, and only remember these dreadful things, death is the king of terrors to us. Hearts are sickened and reins are loosened, because of him.

But, indeed, he is an enemy, for what comes he to do to our body ? I know he doeth that which ultimately leadeth to its betterness, but still it is that which, in itself and for the present, is not joyous, but grievous. He comes to take the light from the eyes, the hearing from the ears, the speech from the tongue, the activity from the hand, and the thought from the brain. He comes to transform a living man into a mass of putrefaction, to degrade the beloved form of a brother and friend to such a condition of corruption that affection itself cries out, “Bury my dead out of my sight.” Death, thou child of sin, Christ hath transformed thee marvelously, but in thyself thou art an enemy before whom flesh and blood tremble, for they know that thou art the murderer of all of woman born, whose thirst for human prey the blood of nations cannot slake.

If you think for a few moments of this enemy, you will observe some of his points of character. He is the *common* foe of all God’s people, and the enemy of all men ; for however some have been persuaded that they should not die, yet is there no discharge in this war ; and if in this conscription a man escapes the ballot many and many a year, till his grey beard seems to defy the winter’s hardest frost, yet must the man of iron yield at last. It is appointed unto all men once to die. The strongest man has no elixir of eternal life wherewith to renew his youth amid the decays of age ; nor has the wealthiest prince a price wherewith to bribe destruction. To the grave must thou descend, O crowned monarch ! for sceptres and shovels are akin. To the sepulchre must thou go down, O mighty man of valor ! for sword and spade are of like metal. The prince is brother to the worm, and must dwell in the same house. Of our whole race it is true, “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

Death is also a *subtle* foe, lurking everywhere, even in the most harmless things. Who can tell where Death has not prepared his ambuscades? He meets us both at home and abroad; at the table he assails men in their food, and at the fountain he poisons their drink. He waylayeth us in the streets, and he seizeth us in our beds; he rideth on the storm at sea, and he walks with us when we are on our way upon the solid land. Whither can we fly to escape from thee, O Death, for from the summit of the Alps men have fallen to their graves, and in the deep places of the earth, where the miner goeth down to find the precious ore, there hast thou sacrificed many a hecatomb of precious lives. Death is a subtle foe, and with noiseless foot-falls follows close at our heels when least we think of him.

He is an enemy whom *none of us will be able to avoid*, take what by-paths we may, nor can we escape from him when our hour is come. Into this fowler's nets, like the birds, we shall all fly; in his great *seine* must all the fishes of the great sea of life be taken when their day is come. As surely as sets the sun, or as the midnight stars at length descend beneath the horizon, or as the waves sink back into the sea, or as the bubble bursts, so must we all, early or late, come to our end, and disappear from earth, to be known no more among the living.

Sudden, too, full often, are the assaults of this enemy.

“Leaves have their time to fall,
And flowers to wither at the north wind's breath,
And stars to set—but all,
Thou hast all seasons for thine own, O Death

Such things have happened as for men to die without an instant's notice; with a psalm upon their lips, they have passed away; or engaged in their daily business, they have been summoned to give in their account. We have heard of one who, when the morning paper brought him news that a friend in business had died, was drawing on his boots to go to his counting-house, and observed with a laugh, that as far as he was concerned, he was so busy he had no time to die. Yet, ere the words were finished, he fell forward and was a corpse. Sudden deaths are not so uncommon as to be marvels, if we dwell in the centre of a large circle of mankind. Thus is death a foe not to be despised or trifled with. Let us remember all his characteristics, and we shall not be inclined to think lightly of the grim enemy whom our glorious Redeemer has destroyed.

Secondly, let us remember that death is AN ENEMY TO BE DESTROYED. Remember that our Lord Jesus Christ has already wrought a great victory upon death, so that he has delivered us from lifelong bondage through its fear. He has not yet *destroyed death*, but he has gone very near to it, for we are told that he has “abolished death, and hath brought life

and immortality to light through the gospel." This surely must come very near to having destroyed death altogether.

In the first place, our Lord has subdued death in the very worst sense, by having delivered his people from spiritual death. "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." Once you had no divine life whatever, but the death of original depravity remained upon you, and so you were dead to all divine and spiritual things; but now, beloved, the Spirit of God, even He that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, has raised you up into newness of life, and you have become new creatures in Christ Jesus. In this sense, death has been subdued.

Our Lord in his lifetime also conquered death by restoring certain individuals to life. There were three memorable cases in which at his bidding the last enemy resigned his prey. Our Lord went into the ruler's house, and saw the little girl who had lately fallen asleep in death, around whom they wept and lamented; he heard their scornful laughter, when he said, "She is not dead, but sleepeth," and he put them all out, and said to her, "Maid, arise!" Then was the spoiler spoiled, and the dungeon door set open. He stopped the funeral procession at the gates of Nain, whence they were carrying forth a young man, "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow," and he said, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." When that young man sat up, and our Lord delivered him to his mother, then again was the prey taken from the mighty. Chief of all, when Lazarus had lain in the grave so long that his sister said, "Lord, by this time he stinketh;" when, in obedience to the word, "Lazarus, come forth!" forth came the raised one with his grave-clothes still about him, but yet really quickened, then was death seen to be subservient to the Son of Man. "Loose him and let him go," said the conquering Christ, and death's bonds were removed, for the lawful captive was delivered. When, at the Redeemer's resurrection, many of the saints arose and came out of their graves into the holy city, then was the crucified Lord proclaimed to be victorious over death and the grave.

Still, brethren, these were but preliminary skirmishes and mere foreshadowings of the grand victory by which death was overthrown. The real triumph was achieved upon the cross.

"He hell in hell laid low;
Made sin, He sin o'erthrew:
Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,
And death, by dying, slew."

When Christ died, he suffered the penalty of death on the behalf of all his people, and therefore no believer now dies by way of punishment for sin, since we cannot dream that a righteous

God would twice exact the penalty for one offence. Death, since Jesus died, is not a penal infliction upon the children of God ; as such he has abolished it, and it can never be enforced. Why die the saints, then ? Why, because their bodies must be changed ere they can enter heaven. "Flesh and blood," as they are, "cannot inherit the kingdom of God." A divine change must take place upon the body before it will be fit for incorruption and glory ; and death and the grave are, as it were, the refining pot and the furnace, by means of which the body is made ready for its future bliss. Death, it is true, thou art not yet destroyed, but our living Redeemer has so changed thee that thou art no longer death, but something other than thy name ! Saints die not now, but they are dissolved and depart. Death is the loosing of the cable, that the bark may freely sail to the fair havens. Death is the fiery chariot in which we ascend to God ; it is the gentle voice of the great King, who cometh into his banqueting hall, and saith, "Friend, come up higher." Behold, on eagle's wings we mount, we fly, far from this land of mist and cloud, into the eternal serenity and brilliance of God's own house above. Yes, our Lord has abolished death. The sting of death is sin, and our great Substitute has taken that sting away by his great sacrifice. Stingless, death abides among the people of God, but it so little harms them that to them "it is not death to die."

Further, Christ vanquished Death and thoroughly overcame him when he rose. What a temptation one has to paint a picture of the resurrection, but I will not be led aside to attempt more than a few touches. When our great Champion awoke from his brief sleep of death, and found himself in the withdrawing-room of the grave, he quietly proceeded to put off the garments of the tomb. How leisurely he proceeded ! He folded up the napkin and placed it by itself, that those who lose their friends might wipe their eyes therewith ; and then he took off the winding-sheet, and laid the grave-clothes by themselves, that they might be there when his saints come thither, so that the chamber might be well furnished, and the bed ready sheeted and prepared for their rest. The sepulchre is no longer an empty vault, a dreary charnel, but a chamber of rest, a dormitory furnished and prepared, hung with the arras which Christ himself has bequeathed. It is now no more a damp, dark, dreary prison ; Jesus has changed all that.

" 'Tis now a cell where angels use
To come and go with heavenly news."

The angel from heaven rolled away the stone from our Lord's sepulchre, and let in the fresh air and light again upon our Lord, and he stepped out more than a conqueror. Death had fled. The grave had capitulated.

‘Lives again our glorious King !
‘Where, O death, is now thy sting ?’
Once He died our souls to save ;
‘Where’s thy victory, boasting grave ? ’”

Well, brethren, so surely as Christ rose, so did he guarantee as an absolute certainty the resurrection of all his saints into a glorious life for their bodies, the life of their souls never having paused even for a moment. In this he conquered death ; and since that memorable victory, every day Christ is overcoming death, for he gives his Spirit to his saints, and having that Spirit within them, they meet the last enemy without alarm ; often they confront him with songs, perhaps more frequently they face him with calm countenance, and fall asleep with peace. I will not fear thee, Death ; why should I ? Thou lookest like a dragon, but thy sting is gone. Thy teeth are broken, oh, old lion, wherefore should I fear thee ? I know thou art no more able to destroy me, but thou art sent as a messenger to conduct me to the golden gate, wherein I shall enter and see my Saviour’s unveiled face for ever. Expiring saints have often said that their last beds have been the best they have ever slept upon. Many of them have inquired,

“ Tell me, my soul, can this be death ? ”

To die has been so different a thing from what they expected it to be, so lightsome and so joyous ; they have been so unloaded of all care, have felt so relieved instead of burdened, that they have wondered whether this could be the monster they had been so afraid of all their days. They find it a pin’s prick, whereas they feared it would prove a sword-thrust ; it is the shutting of the eye on earth, and the opening of it in heaven, whereas they thought it would have been a stretching upon the rack, or a dreary passage through a dismal region of gloom and dread. Beloved, our exalted Lord has overcome death in all these ways.

But now, observe, that this is not the text—the text speaks of something yet to be done. The last enemy that *shall be* destroyed is death, so that death, in the sense meant by the text, is not destroyed yet. He is to be destroyed, and how will that be ?

Well, I take it death will be destroyed in the sense, first, that, at the coming of Christ, *those who are alive and remain shall not see death*. They shall be changed ; there must be a change, even to the living, before they can inherit eternal life ; but they shall not actually die. Do not envy them, for they will have no preference beyond those that sleep ; rather do I think theirs to be the inferior lot of the two in some respects. But they will not know death ; the multitude of the Lord’s own who will be alive at his coming will pass into glory without needing

to die. Thus death, as far as they are concerned, will be destroyed.

But the sleeping ones, the myriads who have left their flesh and bones to moulder back to earth, death shall be destroyed even as to them, for when the trumpet sounds they shall rise from the tomb. *The resurrection is the destruction of death.* We never taught, nor believed, nor thought that every particle of every body that was put into the grave would come to its fellow, and that the absolutely identical material would rise; but we do say that the identical body will be raised, and that as surely as there cometh out of the ground the seed that was put into it, though in a very different guise—for it cometh not forth as a seed, but as a flower—so surely shall the same body rise again. The same material is not necessary; but there shall come out of the grave, aye, come out of the earth, if it never saw a grave, or come out of the sea, if devoured by monsters, that self-same body for true identity, which was inhabited by the soul while here below. Was it not so with our Lord? Even so shall it be with his own people, and then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O, death! where is thy sting? O, grave! where is thy victory?"

There will be this feature in our Lord's victory, that death will be fully destroyed, because *those who rise will not be one whit the worse for having died.* I believe, concerning those new bodies, that there will be no trace upon them of the feebleness of old age, none of the marks of long and wearying sickness, none of the scars of martyrdom. Death shall not have left his mark upon them at all, except it be some glory mark which shall be to their honor, like the scars in the flesh of the Well-beloved, which are his chief beauty, even now, in the eyes of those for whom his hands and feet were pierced. In this sense death shall be destroyed, because he shall have done no damage to the saints at all; the very trace of decay shall have been swept away from the redeemed.

And then, finally, there shall, after this trumpet of the Lord, be no *more death*, neither sorrow, nor crying, for the former things have passed away. "Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over Him;" and so also the quickened ones, His own redeemed, they too shall die no more. Oh, dreadful, dreadful supposition, that they should ever have to undergo temptation or pain, or death a second time. It cannot be. "Because I live," says Christ, "they shall live also." Yet the doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul having been given up by some, certain of them have felt obliged to give up with the eternity of future punishment the eternity of future bliss, and assuredly as far as

some great proof texts are concerned, they stand or fall together. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal;" if the one state be short, so must the other be: whatever the adjective means in the one case, it means in the other. To us the word means endless duration in both cases, and we look forward to a bliss which shall never know end or duration. Then in the tearless, sorrowless, graveless country death shall be utterly destroyed.

III. And now, last of all—and the word "last" sounds fitly in this case—DEATH IS TO BE DESTROYED LAST. Because he came in last he must go out last. Death was not the first of our foes; first came the devil, then sin, then death. Death is not the worst of enemies; death is an enemy, but he is much to be preferred to our other adversaries. It were better to die a thousand times than to sin. To be tried by death is nothing, compared with being tempted by the devil. The mere physical pains connected with dissolution are comparative trifles, compared with the hideous grief which is caused by sin, and the burden which a sense of guilt causes to the soul. No, death is but a secondary mischief, compared with the defilement of sin. Let the great enemies go down first; smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; let sin and Satan, the lord of all these evils, be smitten first, and death may well be left to the last.

Notice that death is the last enemy to each individual Christian, and the last to be destroyed. Well now, if the Word of God says it is the last, I want to remind you of a little piece of practical wisdom—leave him to be the last. Brother, do not dispute the appointed order, but let the last be last. I have known a brother wanting to vanquish death long before he died. But, brother, you do not want dying grace till dying moments. What would be the good of dying grace while you are yet alive? A boat will only be needful when you reach a river. Ask for living grace, and glorify Christ thereby, and then you shall have dying grace when dying time comes. Your enemy is going to be destroyed, but not to-day. There is a great host of enemies to be fought to-day, and you may be content to let this one alone for a while. This enemy will be destroyed, but of the times and the seasons we are in ignorance; our wisdom is to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ as the duty of every day requires. Take your trials as they come, brother! As the enemies march up slay them, rank upon rank; but if you fail in the name of God to smite the front ranks, and say, "No, I am only afraid of the rear rank," then you are playing the fool. Leave the final shock of arms till the last adversary advances, and meanwhile, hold you your place in the conflict. God will, in due time, help you to over-

come your last enemy, but meanwhile, see to it that you overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. If you live well you will die well. That same covenant in which the Lord Jesus gave you life contains also the grant of death, for "All things are yours, whether things present or things to come, or life or death, all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

Why is death left to the last? Well, I think it is because Christ can make much use of him. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death, because death is of great service before he is destroyed. Oh, what lessons some of us have learned from death! "Our dying friends come o'er us like a cloud to damp our brainless ardors;" make us feel that these poor fleeting toys are not worth living for; that as others pass away so must we also be gone, and thus they help to make us set loose by this world, and urge us to take wing and mount toward the world to come. There are, perhaps, no sermons like the deaths which have happened in our households; the departure of our beloved friends have been to us solemn discourses of divine wisdom, which our heart could not help hearing. So Christ has spared death to make him a preacher to His saints.

And you know, brethren, that if there had been no death the saints of God would not have had the opportunity to exhibit the highest ardor of their love. Where has love to Christ triumphed most? Why, in the death of the martyrs at the stake and on the rack. O Christ! thou never hadst such garlands woven for Thee by human hands as they have brought Thee who have come up to heaven from the forests of persecution, having waded through streams of blood. By death for Christ the saints have glorified Him most.

So is it, in their measure, with saints who die from ordinary deaths. They would have had no such test for faith and work for patience as they now have, if there had been no death. Part of the reason of the continuance of this dispensation is that the Christ of God may be glorified; but if believers never died, the supreme consummation of faith's victory must have been unknown. Brethren, if I may die as I have seen some of our church members die, I court the grand occasion. I would not wish to escape death by some by-road, if I may sing as they sang. If I may have such hosannas and hallelujahs beaming in my very eyes, as I have seen as well as heard from them, it were a blessed thing to die. Yes, as a supreme test of love and faith, death is well respited awhile to let the saints glorify their Master.

Besides, brethren, without death we should not be so conformed to Christ as we shall be if we fall asleep in Him. If there could be any jealousies in heaven among the saints, I

think that any saint who does not die, but is changed when Christ comes, could almost meet me and you, who probably will die, and say, "My brother, there is one thing I have missed; I never lay in the grave, I never had the chill hand of death laid on me, and so in that I was not conformed to my Lord. But *you* know what it is to have fellowship with Him, even in His death." Did I not well say that they that were alive and remain should have no preference over them that are asleep? I think the preference, if anything, shall belong to us who sleep in Jesus, and wake up in His likeness.

Death, dear friends, is not yet destroyed, because he brings the saints home. He does but come to them and whisper his message, and in a moment they are supremely blessed.

"Have done with sin and care and woe,
And with the Saviour rest."

And so death is not destroyed yet, for he answers useful purposes.

But, beloved, he is going to be destroyed. He is the last enemy of the church collectively. The church, as a body, has had a mass of foes to contend with; but after the resurrection we shall say, "This is the last enemy. Not another foe is left." Eternity shall roll on in ceaseless bliss. There may be changes, bringing new delights; perhaps in the eternity to come there may be eras and ages of yet more amazing bliss, and still more superlative ecstasy; but there shall be

"No rude alarm of raging foes,
No cares to break the last repose."

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death, and if the last be slain there can be no future foe. The battle is fought and the victory is won forever. And who hath won it? who but the Lamb that sitteth on the throne, to whom let us all ascribe honor and glory and majesty and power and dominion and might for ever and ever. The Lord help us in our solemn adoration. AMEN.

